

# THE YOUNG RIDER 'GOLDEN GORSE'

*The best  
of all books  
for young riders  
and those  
who teach them to  
ride well and  
love their  
horses*



A 'COUNTRY LIFE' BOOK



## THE YOUNG RIDER

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This book is written specially for children who are at the beginning of their riding careers, and (for it is the most practical of guides) for those who are teaching children to ride.

It was the first of such books to be published, and has remained the best not only because of the author's skill in translating her experience and enthusiasm into instruction that young riders can understand, but also because it has twice been revised. This edition has been so thoroughly re-cast that it is in some respects a new book.

Nevertheless, the purpose remains the same: to 'make' young riders and to make them good horsemen—above all, riders who will enjoy their riding with the least trouble and the minimum of expense. For this reason the author is a strong advocate of the Native pony, and of keeping ponies at grass. Both subjects are fully treated in these pages; they are, indeed, inseparably part of the author's teaching.

KS/64



THIS BOOK BELONGS TO

Mary J. Machin





THE YOUNG RIDER









A PURE-BRED WELSH MOUNTAIN PONY  
*Our native ponies make the best children's mounts*



# THE YOUNG RIDER

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'GOLDEN GORSE'

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CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS  
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# Preface

TO THE FIRST EDITION

RIDING is the healthiest exercise in the world and takes one to the most beautiful places. There are many professions and walks of life in which it is still essential. It opens the way to the finest sport in the world. It gives joy to old age as well as youth. There cannot be many people who can go through life without regretting sooner or later a lack of knowledge about horses.

In the old days there were plenty of people who knew the best way of buying and keeping a beginner's pony, and the things I write about were common-places in most country households. Nowadays everyone knows about gears and throttles and brakes, but the knowledge of the horse is a sealed book, except to a select minority. It is not always easy for those who are not in the riding world to know how to start. There are many among them who have the love of the horse within them and if I can help them along an always enjoyable road I shall be rewarded.

Parents who allow their children to ride give them something which is of incalculable value. A child who is happy on his pony's back has something which will be to him a glorious memory that the years cannot dim, and it is so easy for him to learn if the right road is taken, and so inexpensive.

The genuine ponies have never yet had justice done them. Look at the children's mounts in the hunting-field or the show-ring: common cobs, lumbering along; miniature thoroughbreds running away; hunter-bred ponies, much the same type as the rider will have in later years; but the genuine pony, New Forest, Welsh, Dartmoor and Exmoor, plucky little creatures made to carry a child, how few they are. The years are slipping by; if the child does not have one now, he will never have one, and no amount of horses will make up for this gap in knowledge of the cleverest, the most original, the most entertaining, and the pluckiest member of the equine world.

I have tried to show that there are ways of giving a child the joy of keeping a pony, without the expense of opening a stable. Grown-up beginners, too, may find here how they may master the elements of horsemanship and enjoy riding without great expense.

The method here advocated is not only the cheapest for beginners, but also the best.

Parents are asked to forgive the rather didactic tone of these chapters. This book is not written for people who 'know', but for those who may have missed the chance of accumulating knowledge of the horse.

One so often meets people who say, 'I have always longed to ride,' and it is

just these people, who want to give their children the chance they have missed, whom I hope to help.

#### PREFACE TO THE ENLARGED EDITION

*The Young Rider* was first published in 1928; since then the outlook on children and their ponies has changed very much for the better. Five children seem to be learning to ride today for one who was learning seven years ago. At that time one frequently met people who said 'What is the good of teaching children to ride, the days of the horse are over'! No one would say that now. An Exmoor farmer said to me the other day, 'All the visitors want to ride; they don't know much about it, but they're terrible fond of the horses, always up in the fields taking them lumps of sugar!' They are making a good beginning. The reason for this change seems to lie largely in the revolt from machinery and the wish to get back to Nature. One sees everywhere the springing up of riding-schools and riding-clubs. Classes for children's ponies at the shows and competitions for children and their ponies are now held on a scale unimagined in any previous generation; and this is all to the good, so long as no child makes the mistake of thinking that the winning of prizes is more important than anything else.

Nothing, however, has proved of more value in the pony world than the foundation of the Pony Club in 1929. The object of this Club is to help children with their riding, and it has had extraordinary success. (The address is 66, Sloane Street, London, S.W.1.) For a very small subscription the children who join have the immense advantage of assistance in their riding from hunting people in their neighbourhood most qualified to give it, as well as occasional help and lectures from great experts in the riding world. Such generous voluntary help by riding people all over the country is valuable, and every child who has a branch of the Club within reach should gratefully seize the opportunity of immediately becoming a member.

As a result of these activities the breeding of children's ponies, breaking them, and choosing them, is receiving more attention. The old ideas that any pony will do, or that what a beginner wants is either a miniature thoroughbred or a Shetland are, we hope, dead. People are now awake to the fact that the right beginner's pony – the first pony – needs some finding. They realize how important this first pony is, for with most children the selection of the right first pony is the deciding factor as to whether he or she will become a horseman.

*Country Life* opened its pages last spring to a discussion as to which was the right type of pony. The general opinion seemed to be that though quiet ponies may be found among ponies of every type, the pony most likely to be 'right' would be one of our Moorland ponies; provided that he was properly broken, which he seldom is.



The number of children who keep a pony out at grass and look after him themselves has enormously increased. All this is to the good, and children of today – and their parents – may congratulate themselves that there never has been a time in which there were such chances of learning the joys of horsemanship. Nor can one fail to notice that among the coming generation are many with the root of the matter in them.

It is hoped that still more parents, who are teaching their children to ride, may find this book helpful. Whether one knows much or little about riding and horsemanship, when it comes to teaching difficulties arise. It is easy enough to see that something is wrong with a child's riding, but to know exactly what it is and the easiest way of correcting it needs experience, and too often the knowledge won through failure comes too late. Again, though a child may try to do what 'the book says', he is apt to lose heart without grown-up encouragement when things do not go quite smoothly. For example, there is no subject on which children write to me more often than on the difficulty they have in catching their pony. Here is just one of the instances in which a parent's help is needed – not to help in the actual catching, but to inculcate more patience and perseverance in the procedure advocated.

And lastly, it is hoped that this book may continue to be a help to the older beginner. For the early problems are identical whether the beginner be a child or an adult. Moreover, in the chapters specially written for older riders will be found a simple and economical method of keeping an out-at-grass horse, on which can be learnt all the elements of horsemanship. This method reduces stable worries and expense to a level which will suit most people. Riding need no longer have attached to it the slur that it involves much expense. It is indeed for those who are willing to take a little trouble to gain the necessary knowledge, the least expensive and the most delightful of recreations.

March 1935.

#### PREFACE TO THE FOURTH EDITION

It is a great pleasure to the author to know that another edition of *The Young Rider* is wanted.

A child who can look after his pony well has learnt something of inestimable value; something which will endure throughout life. Science and machinery give rapid and spectacular results, but the happiest people are those who put their trust in Nature and learn from her. She will give us contentment and a happy life.

January, 1952.



# Contents

PREFACES	5
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS	13
LIST OF DIAGRAMS	14
INTRODUCTION	15

## I. MY PONIES *page 17*

## II. HOW TO MANAGE A GRASS-KEPT PONY *page 20*

*Catching—Head Collars and Rope Halters—Driving into the Yard—Can Horses at Grass be Dangerous?—In the Stable—Grooming—Saddling—Bridling—Picking up the Feet—‘Gentling’*

## III. SEAT AND HANDS *page 31*

*A Good Seat—Balance and Grip—Cross-saddle and Side-saddle—The Cross-saddle Seat—Common Faults—Light Hands—Heavy Hands—Position of Arms and Hands*

## IV. THE FIRST LESSONS *page 36*

*The Early Lessons Must Be Good—Going up to Your Pony—Mounting and Dismounting—The Reins—To Walk—To Stop—To Trot and Canter—To Turn—Two Useful Exercises*

## V. HOW TO GET GOOD HANDS *page 43*

*The Signals, or ‘Aids’—Good Hands—The Rider’s Legs—Harmony of Hands and Legs—The Weight of the Rider’s Body—The Length of the Reins*



VI. HEAD-CARRIAGE AND BALANCE *page 50*VII. OUT FOR A RIDE *page 53*

*Where to Ride – Avoid Main Roads – The ‘Going’ – The Pony’s Paces – Choosing Your Own Path – Steep Places – Company – Amount of Work Needed – The Farmer’s Fields – The Wild West – Jumping – Old Sporting Prints: the Theory of Lifting – The Jumping Course*

VIII. THE PONY’S FAULTS AND HOW TO CURE THEM *page 66*

*A Pony Easily Contracts Bad Habits – Understanding Your Pony – Ride Your Pony up to His Bridle – The Rider or the Pony Will Rule – Fights Are to Be Avoided – Shying – Running out – Lying Down – Kicking – Kicking when out at Grass – Rearing – Pulling Ponies – Biting a Puller – Refusing – Jibbing – Difficult to Lead*

IX. THE HORSE’S CHARACTER *page 82*

*The Horse’s Mentality is Different from Ours – He is a Highly Nervous Animal – His Courage – His Love of Sport and Home – Gregariousness and Herd Behaviour – Jealousy – Play – Memory – Affection – His Eyes and Ears – His Hearing – The Tail – The Neigh – Anxiety to Please – Finding the Way Home – Do Not Let Your Pony Get a Bad Name – Fidget’s Bridle*

## X. THE GRASS-KEPT PONY

PART I: THE FIELD AND THE GRASS *page 96*

*Stabled or Grass-kept? – The Grass-kept Pony – Choosing Your Field – Shelter – Water – Company – Flies – Management of Grass – The Pony in Spring – The Pony in Summer – The Pony in Autumn and Winter*

PART II: HAY, OATS AND OTHER FOODS *page 102*

*Hay – Chaff – Oats – Other Foods – Notes on Feeding – Condition*

XI. BRITISH PONIES *page 110*

*British Ponies the Best in the World – The Pure-bred Native pony – The Cross-bred Pony – Is it Possible to Improve the Native Pony? – Pony Societies – The Different Breeds – Ponies for Children over Fourteen – Ponies with Thoroughbred Blood – Children's Ponies at the Shows*

XII. CHOOSING THE PONY *page 121*

*Difficulty of Buying – Choosing the First Pony – What to Look For – Choosing the Second Pony – How to Buy – Hiring an Old Pony – A Month's Trial*

XIII. THE RIDER *page 134*

*Age to Begin – Good Nerve – Courage – Falls – Treat Your Pony with Tact – Do not Spoil (Ruin) Your Pony – Love for Animals*

XIV. SADDLE AND BRIDLE *page 139*

*Buy the Best – Felt Saddles – Safety-bars and Safety-stirrups – Cruppers – Girths – The Bridle – The Snaffle – The Pelham – The Double Bridle – The Martingale – Cleaning and Preserving Leather – Cleaning Girths, Steel, and Nickel – Care in Saddling and Bridling – A Few Stories with Morals*

XV. SHOEING *page 153*

XVI. RIDING CLOTHES *page 154*

*Hats – Coats, Breeches and Gaiters, and Jodhpurs – Gloves – Hunting-crop – Spurs*

XVII. VETERINARY *page 157*

*Colic – Coughs and Colds – Surfeit – Warbles – Sore Backs – Cuts and Wounds – Flies – Broken Knees – Lameness – Laminitis – Brushing – Itching Coats*

XVIII. MORE ABOUT CONDITION AND MANAGEMENT *page 162*

*Clipping and Condition – Grass-kept Ponies for Older Riders – Regulation of Feeds – Shelter – The Right Sort to Buy – Buying – Different Ways of Managing – Hirelings – Sunday*

XIX. THE RIDING HOLIDAY *page 172*

*The Best Way of Seeing the Country – The Horse – Sending Horses and Ponies by Rail – Exmoor a Paradise for Riders – Our Plan of Management – Grooming*

XX. DRESSAGE AND HAUTE ÉCOLE *page 176*

*Dressage, or Horse-training – Haute École, or the Higher Education of the Horse*

XXI. HUNTING *page 181*

*Fox-Hunting – Expenses – The Hunter – Scent – Hunting on Foot – The First Hunt on Your Pony – Pace – Fences – Different Hunting Countries – The Rider's Manners – Hunting People – Crops, Gates, etc. – Your First Good Run*

EPILOGUE *page 200*



# Illustrations

A pure-bred Welsh mountain pony ( <i>Photo: Sport &amp; General</i> )	
	<i>frontispiece</i>
New Forest ponies	25
Gradual breaking by kindness	25
The proper way to bridle your pony ( <i>Photo: Frank H. Meads</i> )	26
The first lessons: on a leading rein ( <i>Photo: Graphic Photo Union</i> )	27
The first lessons: a child too small for her pony	27
The new pony: making friends ( <i>Photo: Nicholas Horne Ltd.</i> )	28
The new pony: getting him used to new surroundings ( <i>Photo: Nicholas Horne Ltd.</i> )	28
A promising little rider mounted on a pony which suits her	37
A pony who is a little too much for his rider	37
Starting out for a ride ( <i>Photo: Frank H. Meads</i> )	38
A well-mounted party ( <i>Photo: Frank H. Meads</i> )	55
Learning to jump: the take-off ( <i>Photo: Frank H. Meads</i> )	56
Learning to jump: the landing ( <i>Photo: Frank H. Meads</i> )	56
A good jump ( <i>Photo: Sport &amp; General</i> )	57
A bad jump	57
The points of a pony ( <i>Photo: W. W. Rouch</i> )	58
The head of a thoroughbred ( <i>Photo: Sport &amp; General</i> )	75
The head of a cross-bred pony	75
The head of an Arab ( <i>By courtesy of the Rt. Hon. Lady Wentworth</i> )	76
A cross-bred pony ( <i>Photo: Sport &amp; General</i> )	76
Exmoor foals nearly twelve months old ( <i>Photo: R. Kingley Tayler</i> )	93
A class for Exmoor pony stallions	93
A Welsh mountain pony ( <i>By courtesy of the Welsh Pony and Cob Society</i> )	94
A beautiful Dartmoor pony of the old type ( <i>Photo: W. W. Rouch</i> )	94

A New Forest Pony	111
A Highland pony of the driving type ( <i>Photo: W. W. Rouch</i> )	111
A Moorland pony full of quality	112
A Thoroughbred type of pony	112
A Thoroughbred type of pony who has won many prizes in classes for small children ( <i>Photo: Sport &amp; General</i> )	129
Another show winner modelled on a lightweight hunter ( <i>Photo: Miles Brothers</i> )	129
A leather hunting saddle	130
Jointed snaffle	130
A snaffle bridle	147
The snaffle bridle properly put on	147
The Pony Club: members who have distinguished themselves in horsemanship ( <i>Photos: Sport &amp; General and Peter Wynham</i> )	148
A New Forest pony after skilful training ( <i>By courtesy of Mrs. P. Seaton-Stedham</i> )	165
The same pony, Robin, 'in the rough' ( <i>By courtesy of Mrs. P. Seaton-Stedham</i> )	165
A native pony shows the way ( <i>Photo: Sport &amp; General</i> )	166
Members of the Pony Club with hay-nets ( <i>Photo: Sport &amp; General</i> )	183
A Welsh pony out hunting	183
Hunting in Ireland ( <i>Photo: Irish Tourist Assoc.</i> )	184

## DIAGRAMS

I. The snaffle bridle	29
II. Riding on the right rein	41
III. Figure of eight	41
IV. Safety bar, with catch down	140
V. Safety bar, with catch up	140
VI. A crupper	141
VII. Half-moon Pelham	144
VIII. The curb-chain	145
IX. Hunting crop	156
X. Thong of plaited leather	156

# Introduction

NEARLY all children love animals and the country, for children are nearer to Nature than grown-ups; but unless this love is cultivated they will lose it as they get older. Love of Nature gives some of us more pleasure than anything else in the world, and the reason we love her is because of her beauty.

A few years ago England was a far more beautiful country than now. Beauty vanishes when the motor comes, and if you want to find the old beauty of England, you must seek out places where the horse and not the motor can take you. Horses will take you to the most beautiful country; over fields, down lanes, up and over the moor purple with heather; or over the downs with their short turf, ideal for a gallop.

From the very first your rides will be a joy, and the longer you go on and the more expert you become the greater the joy will be. There is no greater pleasure in the world than riding a good horse, but you must not expect to learn everything at once; it is not easy to ride well.

Somebody has said, 'There is more room on the floor than in the saddle', and I suppose this is the reason so many people prefer to remain on the floor, when they might feel like a king in the saddle. Winston Churchill has given his opinion that 'no hour of life is lost that is spent in the saddle'.

To become a good horseman is a matter of taking sufficient pains and having sufficient practice.

Riding does not come by nature; many people who have ridden all their lives and can stick on like leeches, never become good horsemen. This is the result of taking insufficient care at the beginning of their career; bad habits become fixed, and are hard to cure. Good lessons are invaluable if you can get them; otherwise you can learn a good deal from a book.

You can learn a great deal, too, from going to a good horse-show – perhaps you will be able to show your own pony – or from watching good riders out hunting; and if you go out hunting you will find it is the best fun in the world.





# My Ponies

I WILL begin by relating my own experiences.

Some years ago, owing to the housing shortage in the town, I went to live at a farmhouse in the country. I had plenty of time and a great love of horses, and the idea occurred to me of buying some six-month-old ponies and training them gradually for children's ponies. With the help of Mr Calthrop's book, *The Horse as Comrade and Friend*, I had no difficulty, and my ponies taught me a great deal. They became gentle and trustworthy, and absolutely reliable under this system of gradual breaking by kindness.

However, when they were ready for sale, with perfect mouths and manners, purchasers at thirty guineas<sup>1</sup> apiece, which was practically cost price, were not forthcoming. I knew their value, and was determined not to give them away. A hunting farmer who knew the scarcity of really quiet and well-broken children's ponies assured me that he considered they would fetch fifty guineas apiece at Tattersalls. I was cheered by his opinion, but I had my doubts and decided to keep them until buyers appeared.

Meanwhile, once they were broken, I did not want the bill for keep to add to their expense, and I also wanted them regularly exercised. I therefore determined to teach half a dozen children to ride.

I had by this time returned to the town, and the ponies were kept some three miles out by a friendly farmer. Two or three times a week I and my pupils repaired to the farm at an agreed time. The saddles and bridles, each with name below, were kept in one of the farm outbuildings. The children selected the bridle of the pony they were to ride and we proceeded to the field.

Each child went up to her own pony, caught it with the help of a lump of sugar and bridled it in the field. Directly the bit was safely in its mouth a second lump of sugar was given. As there were often half a dozen other horses, some of them rather wild, running with our ponies, and there were several fields open to them, I think this was an achievement. At first when we wanted them we used to stand at the entrance to the field and call to them. We could generally see the whole herd grazing in the far distance. First one head would go up and then another to listen; then the hunters, who were no concern of ours, would start grazing again, but our ponies would detach themselves and begin to walk slowly towards us in single file; one at the back would start trotting, another would break into a gallop, and up they dashed, all mane, tail, and shining eyes, pulling up sharply at the very last moment in a semicircle. All were alight with excitement, eager

<sup>1</sup> All prices have roughly doubled since the second World War.

to have their bridles put on, and their only fear was that there would not be sufficient riders, and that they would be the one to be left behind. This trampling semicircle was rather hair-raising for the children, though they enjoyed it; so that eventually we found it better to catch our own mounts by walking ourselves up to the herd without exciting them.

The ponies were taken up to the farm and given a very small feed of oats while saddling was in progress. It was important that they should feel that everything connected with being caught and saddled was a pleasure and not a nuisance. The ponies were young and the children sometimes awkward at bridling and saddling, but the rewards made amends for the loss of freedom and the discomfort. The children enjoyed the time spent in the stable, feeding, grooming and saddling their ponies, as much as the riding, and it certainly taught them a great deal. What is the good of being able to ride a pony if you cannot put his bridle and saddle on properly? Even a great many grown-up people cannot do so.

The children had all ridden a little, but none of them was far advanced. We rode for a couple of hours, and the children and ponies thoroughly enjoyed themselves. The children made tremendous progress; they realized how kind their mounts were and they thus gained confidence. In a very short time they were jumping little fences, and no pony ever refused. I am proud to say that in the year and a half I taught them they only had two falls. In neither instance was the pony to blame nor was the child hurt. Eventually the ponies were all sold, and I had continued good reports of all of them. The children, whose average age was thirteen, were soon advanced enough to ride stabled and well-mannered polo ponies, but I think they would agree with me that they could never enjoy any rides more than they did those on the grass-fed ponies. They dreamt about their ponies and carried their photos about with them.

From my breaking experience I learnt this: the horse will always do right if he understands. This is very remarkable. It is true neither of human beings nor of dogs. We have been told it often enough by great breakers in the past, but writers often talk as if there is some resistance to be overcome, some fight to be fought in which man must show he is master. No fight is necessary: all that is needed is love of the horse, a pocketful of oats, patience, and the ability to make your wishes understood.

Owing to my ignorance I never used either a lunging rein or the long reins; both needed experience in which I was lacking. All I did was to tame my ponies (they were all as wild as hawks to start with), and then lead them about, and get them used by degrees to everything. I always worked entirely alone, as that helped to give them confidence and secured their attention, and I had no scenes or outbreaks of any sort. Of course there were a few occasions on which a young pony thought his own way was best and wished to take it, but I was always able



to think of a way out. A handful of oats invariably sweetened the atmosphere, and at four and a half years old every pony was absolutely obedient and remained so.

All the ponies have now gone, but at intervals I get news of them. Friendly, affectionate little creatures, they have made their own way to their new owners' hearts, and have progressed with their life's work, teaching children to ride as quickly as may be. Some take their owners hunting, some play at Red Indians, one consents to carry a row of tiny children on his back. Of course I miss them – who would not? There is something about a young horse that melts the heart – but a young pony . . .

I kept my stud for four years. At the end I was no richer and no poorer except for a considerable increase in experience, and a store of happy memories. And what happy memories they have left – a general impression of shining eyes, galloping hooves, and flying manes and tails.

# How to Manage a Grass-kept Pony

*Catching – Head Collars and Rope Halters – Driving into the Yard – Can Horses at Grass be Dangerous? – In the Stable – Grooming – Saddling – Bridling – Picking up the Feet – ‘Gentling’*

## CATCHING

MANY people find difficulty in catching their pony. A pony out at grass is no good unless you can catch him at once when you want him. It is no uncommon thing to see a whole household chivvying a pony round a field; if he gallops round until he is tired and then gets into a corner and presents his heels to his pursuers, surely we cannot blame him; it is his natural defence in the circumstances.

Such scenes ought never to occur. If a pony is difficult to catch it is clear that he is being treated on the wrong lines. Never allow your pony in any circumstances to be chased about. He will never forget it. If a pony is fond of you, he should walk or trot up when you call to him in his field. Of course, when he is first bought this cannot be expected; you are new to him and he is shy and nervous of you. That shyness you must overcome, and to do so you only need patience and sympathy. These are the two most important gifts of the horseman, and so if you can win him now, you will have taken a big step towards becoming a good horseman.

This is the proper method. Go to the field with your pocket full of oats, or with some tit-bits which he likes – apples, sugar, bread, or carrots. Walk up to your pony slowly, advancing towards his shoulder and talking to him. Hold out a handful of oats, and get him to advance a step towards you as he takes them. Rub his forehead gently, then between his ears, and over his cheeks. If he seems nervous, you must produce more oats and continue this until his fear goes, and he will then allow you to slip the halter on.

If he dashes away before you have done this, do not grab at him, or you confirm his suspicion that you are dangerous, as he thought. You must begin all over again, realizing that you were in too great a hurry and you must go more slowly. If you proceed always like this he will get easier to catch each time, until you can throw his halter on anyhow and he will not care.

Supposing that he is so nervous that he refuses to take anything out of your hand, you will have to exercise patience, and tame him as you would a robin, but success is certain if you proceed as follows. Get a solid wooden box, leave it in his field, and each day put in it a small feed of oats. When after two or three days he looks for your coming, stand at such a distance that he does not fear you while he

eats. Reduce this distance daily as his nervousness lessens, until he allows you to stand near his box without minding. Then hold out a handful of oats, keeping perfectly still; he will eat them when he has finished those in the box. Then make him eat entirely from your hand. Then coax him to allow you to rub his head as you feed him, then to follow you about. After this he will let himself be haltered. I have never failed to catch and halter even wild unbroken ponies by this method. Gentleness and firmness are all-powerful with the horse, but if you force him and make him fear you, there will be trouble. Ponies are loving and lovable and easily trained, but they are also easily ruined and made vicious by ignorant treatment.

Remember that when you are catching your pony, you are entirely at his mercy. You cannot catch him if he does not want to be caught. Therefore everything connected with being caught and taken to the stable must be delightful and pleasant to him.

I once saw a man lose his temper badly after chasing an old horse round and round a huge field for half the morning. When he at last succeeded in haltering him, he hit him and abused him. What trouble he was laying up for himself in the future, and what a queer ignorant creature that horse must have considered him!

#### HEAD COLLARS AND ROPE HALTERS

If a pony is a little shy, leave a well-fitting leather head collar on him for a week or two; it is far easier to get hold of this. He must not wear it too long, because it is apt to rub him and make his head sore. The taming process must go on simultaneously, so that the head collar may soon be discontinued.

Nervous ponies much dislike having anything put on over their heads. That is the reason that head collars are fashioned as they are. Fit them on, therefore, from underneath the head; this needs a lot of practice on a quiet horse, until it can be done gently. These head collars are far better than rope halters. Rope halters are cheap, but they soon wear out.

Be careful to knot your rope halter in such a manner that it cannot slip when the pony pulls. Any good carter or groom will show you how to make a knot which will not slip. If it slips and pinches him under the jaw he will be hurt and frightened.

The giving of tit-bits needs discretion; do not give them unless they are necessary. If a pony is shy you must be generous. But there comes a moment when shyness disappears and instead the pony shows a disposition to grab from you, nip at you, and even push you down, in his demands for more oats. If these symptoms appear, the time for many rewards is over, and he must only have an occasional tit-bit, say two in the course of the day, or he will develop the unpleasant trick of biting or otherwise bullying you to give him more.



## DRIVING INTO THE YARD

If it is essential to catch a pony before there has been time to educate him as described, he should be driven with the aid of two or three helpers from one field to another until he reaches the farmyard and from there into the stable. It must be impressed upon the helpers that the pony should never go out of a walk, and that if he does it shows that they have moved too quickly. If he can be kept at the walk he will be got in without being scared. But a wild pony like this is not suitable for a child; he should be made quiet and fond of human beings by the other method and he can then be trusted with children.

## CAN HORSES AT GRASS BE DANGEROUS?

Your own ponies will be safe enough, once they know you, but there are a few things to be guarded against. It is not wise to keep many ponies at grass together; two or three are enough. If many are together there is always the risk of horse-play, quite harmless in intention but holdings elements of danger. For instance, one horse may bite another and that other in trying to escape may cannon into a human being.

Children should be careful how they approach their pony. We were always told as children to 'keep away from his heels', and that is a sound rule to follow. My sister as a small child was very badly kicked by a strange donkey; she had been told not to go near it, but she approached via the hindquarters hoping to steal a bare-backed ride; one could hardly blame the donkey. He did not know her and he did not like that manner of approach.

Jealousy too must be guarded against. A lady I knew was giving her horse a lump of sugar when a strange horse came up and asked for one too. She did not want to be surrounded by all the occupants of the field and refused his demand, whereupon he deliberately turned round and kicked her – pure jealousy, but understandable. Never trust strange horses.

## IN THE STABLE

If your pony is nervous in the stable, you must be very quiet, and very slow, and give him something to eat. His fears will soon evaporate and his visit to the stable become a pleasure instead of an anxiety to him. If he dislikes having his snaffle on, be slow, be gentle, and give him a tit-bit. If he dislikes being girthed up, follow the same routine – similarly for practically everything with which you may have difficulty. You will soon cure him of any little failing which if not attended to will become a bad habit.

When you have got your pony into the stable, tie him up to the manger.

Remember that he hates a dead pull. If you tie him to the ring in the manger, there will be no 'give' in the rope, and if he pulls back from the manger he is very likely to smash his halter or break his rope. For this reason, in each stall there should be a stout wooden ball with a hole through it. The halter-rope is passed through the ring in the manger, then through the ball and knotted below it so that it cannot slip through. It should be knotted at such a length that when the pony is standing up to the manger the ball just touches the ground. Now when the pony steps back, he is not at once checked by the rope, but the ball runs up to the ring; he finds he has considerable liberty of movement and does not get frightened. When he steps forward again the ball runs down.

### GROOMING

You need for this a dandy brush and a curry comb; the dandy brush is to clean the pony, the curry comb to clean the brush. Brush him over with the dandy brush so as to remove the mud. Use the brush firmly but gently—do not hit him with it. As the brush gets dirty draw the curry comb over it to get the dirt out, and knock the dirt from the curry comb out on to the ground. If you have not got a brush, twist up a wisp of hay in your hand and groom him with that.

Run your hand over the place where the saddle and girths go, to make sure that there are no lumps of mud left, else he might buck when the saddle was on. Do not groom him too much because the grass-kept pony must have the grease left in his coat or he will catch cold. While you are doing this, if he is at all restless give him a tiny feed of oats; about half a pound is enough, mixed with an equal bulk of chaff.

If your pony is clipped and stabled, grooming is a much more serious business. Every scrap of dust should be removed from the pony's skin and the brush principally used will be a soft 'body brush'. A dandy brush would be too hard for a clipped pony.

### SADDLING

While he is eating, fetch your saddle, make sure it is smooth and comfortable for him, and put it on his back, rather far forward. Now pull it gently back, so that all his hairs are laid straight and not ruffled and uncomfortable.

Remember that you want to ride on his back and not on his shoulders; and when the saddle is in the right position, the girths should be two or three inches behind his elbows.

If the saddle is too far forward, it will pinch his shoulder blades, the girths will pinch him just behind the elbows, and neither of you will enjoy your ride.

Be careful not to put the saddle too far back either, because he is easily injured

by weight on his loins. Now you must tighten the girths. Grass-fed ponies need a lot of care because their girth decreases in the most amazing way when they have been out a short time. Use two girths. Be sure that they are comfortable and soft and in good repair, and that each has two buckles.

Pull them up from the near (that is the left) side loosely, and be careful not to pinch him. Run your fingers down between him and his girths to make sure no hairs are caught up near the buckle.

Now put on his crupper, if he wears one (Fig. VI). Unfasten it from the saddle and push his tail neatly through it, see that it is comfy and that there are no pulling hairs. Then tighten it until you can easily turn your hand over between his croup (the top of his hindquarters) and the crupper.

Ponies need considerable care in saddling, because their withers are sometimes low and this will make the saddle shift forward. If a grass-fed pony gets a big belly this too will push the saddle forward. For these reasons many grass-fed ponies need cruppers, and they are specially necessary in hilly countries.

I once saw a most extraordinary looking pony out hunting with a small boy on him. The saddle was perched on the pony's withers so that his back looked as long as a crocodile's. His head was very low and stuck straight out in front of him and that made him look longer still. He had once been a very good pony but had been ruined by careless saddling and over-galloping.

Always do as much of the saddling and bridling as you can from the near side.

#### BRIDLING

This needs great care and gentleness. It is easy to make your pony difficult to bridle. If, each time you put his bridle on, he knows you are going to hurt his mouth, he will soon get difficult, so be careful. It is really quite easy, if you do it the right way.

Hold your snaffle by the top of the head-piece in your right hand; see that it hangs straight; undo the noseband. Go up to your pony, turn him round in his stall so that if he backs he will be stopped by the manger. Take off the halter. Lift the reins over his head. If you put them close behind his ears, where his neck bends easily, you will be able to control him if he is a little impatient. Now put your right arm between his ears over his head (see p. 26).

You will find that the snaffle is now hanging just below your pony's mouth. Arrange it gently so that it is just in front of his lips.

Now you have got to open his mouth; be sure not to hurt him, or he will tell you about it next time you bridle him.

Support the mouthpiece in your left hand, then press your left thumb gently against the corner of his mouth, just where his lips join his cheeks. You need not be afraid of his teeth because there are none just there. When he feels your thumb



NEW FOREST  
PONIES

*They are watching a friend having his breaking-in lesson in the farm-yard; their ages are three and four.*

GRADUAL BREAK-  
ING BY KINDNESS

*Although discipline was strict, my ponies thoroughly enjoyed their training.*







#### THE PROPER WAY TO BRIDLE YOUR PONY

*The right hand holds the bridle and steadies the pony's head. The left hand arranges the mouthpiece in position, and then the left thumb inserted at the corner of the mouth makes the mouth open. This child is managing well, except that her thumb should be higher up at the corner of the mouth.*

## THE FIRST LESSONS

*The earliest lessons should be given on a leading rein, as in this picture. An efficient instructor near at hand gives the rider confidence. Note that this pony has a snaffle bridle. He also wears a head collar by which he can be led or tied up if necessary. He has no shoes; they are unnecessary for a pony doing light work.*

*It is very difficult to find ponies small enough to fit children under seven. Both this child and the one in the previous photograph are too small for their ponies at present. The sole of the boot should about coincide with the lower line of the pony's belly (see frontispiece).*

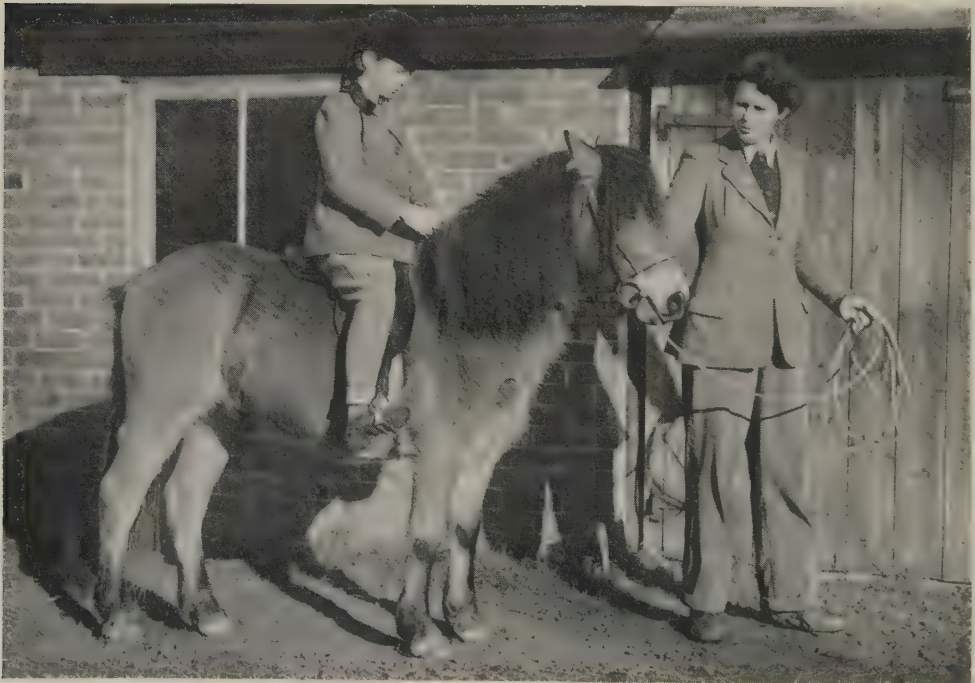




#### THE NEW PONY

*When you buy a new pony it is important to make friends with him by brushing him gently and leading him about before you mount him. Many ponies have had very little experience or training and are therefore easily scared.*

*When he seems quiet and happy, mount gently and get someone to lead him about until he seems used to his new surroundings. This child is sitting beautifully and she fits her pony well.*





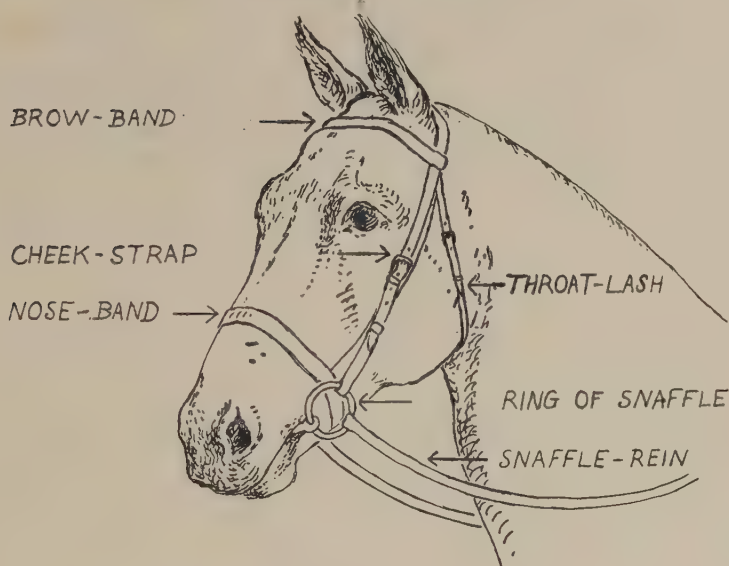


FIG. I. THE SNAFFLE BRIDLE

he will open his mouth, and then your left hand can easily slip the snaffle in (see illustration, p. 26).

If his mouth does not open, push your thumb in and wriggle it up and down, and the mouth will soon open. When the mouthpiece is in, you must get hold of the top of the bridle and slip it over the ears. Now do up the throat-lash very loosely, so that you can push the whole of your fist through.

Then do up the noseband; this should be just loose enough to admit two fingers over the nose easily. A noseband properly put on gives a great deal of extra control. It should be fitted one inch below the projecting cheekbone. A good rough rule for bridling is 'leave room for two fingers everywhere'. Nothing should be tight.

Then give the girths another tightening from the off side until there is just room for your two fingers between the pony and his girths, and you are ready to start.

If your saddle is too loose it may turn over as you are getting on, or shift badly if he shies. If it is too tight, he cannot work properly, and he will be pinched every stride he takes. Grass-fed ponies nearly always need their girths tightening again after you have ridden a very short way. This can be done from the saddle.

#### PICKING UP THE FEET

##### *The foreleg*

Stand at the near side of your pony, close up to him, and looking towards his tail.



Catch hold of the near foreleg just below the knee with your left hand. Pinch it with your fingers, which will cause the muscles to contract. Put your weight against his forearm, which will make him throw his weight on to the other leg. Run your hand down to the fetlock, catch hold of it and pull the leg upwards with your left hand. Then hold it by grasping the toe part of the foot with the fingers of the right hand. In this way the foot can be held up with two fingers only and you will not get tired.

### *The hindleg*

Do not attempt to pick up the hindleg until you are good friends with your pony. If you have any doubts as to whether a pony may kick, get someone to stand at his head and hold it up. He cannot kick effectively with his head high. A nice friendly pony, such as a child should have, will never dream of kicking.

Stand close to your pony, facing his tail, at about the middle of his body. Run your right hand down the leg, placing the flat of your hand on the back tendons, and pull the leg forwards towards you.

### ‘GENTLING’

This ‘gentling’, which is more like stroking a cat than anything else, is a valuable help in making a young or nervous pony quiet. One begins by stroking over the pony’s forehead and gradually works all over him. It has a very sedative, mesmeric effect. Grooming also, which is akin to it, has a valuable soothing influence.

If you are a real animal lover you will soon find out the exact movement which soothes and pleases him most. Of course you must stroke the way the hair lies. It is important to remember that it is not enough to gentle him on one side; both sides must receive attention. Ignorance of this fact has been the cause of many accidents. For example, a pony may be perfectly quiet to mount on the near side, but, unless he has been broken to it, he will be terrified if the rider suddenly mounts on the off side. Many children’s ponies have never been properly broken and need therefore very gentle handling, and quiet riding.

## CHAPTER THREE

# Seat and Hands

*A Good Seat – Balance and Grip – Cross-saddle and Side-saddle – The Cross-saddle Seat – Common Faults – Light Hands – Heavy Hands – Position of Arms and Hands*

### A GOOD SEAT

No one can be a good rider without a good seat, *i.e.* a firm seat combined with the ease and grace that come from security; and no one can have a firm seat without spending many hours in the saddle. The riding muscles must have time to develop. Those who are naturally well balanced have, of course, an advantage, just as they have in skating or dancing, but all must go through an apprenticeship if they want to be 'horsemen', and the more pains they spend on the preliminaries the quicker will be their progress.

### BALANCE AND GRIP

A good seat requires a combination of balance and grip. We want to ride as much as possible by balance, gripping only in emergencies. The rider is then one with his horse: they move together like a pair of good dancers, and all is ease and grace. Rider and horse are of one mind, both sublimely happy. To such a rider, to be on a horse's back is to be a king. All earthly worries fade away, and he shares the courage, the poetry of motion, the glorious vitality, the speed and power of his mount. The rider with an indifferent seat may dream of all this, but though he will enjoy his rides, the fullness of joy is not for him. Surely it is worth while acquiring a good seat when so much depends on it.

The only way to get a good seat is to ride about quietly as much as possible. Then if you are careful to sit in the right position, a good seat will come by itself. Here the grass-fed pony is invaluable – a pony on which you can ride every day for a couple of hours. Plenty of this is necessary, for riding muscles are slow to develop. Balance will gradually be attained, and with it grip.

Those who ride mostly by grip acquire ugly monkey-like seats, tiring to both horse and rider. This seat is the result of being in too great a hurry and learning to ride on horses that are too keen. In thus riding horses that are too much for them, beginners also acquire with a bad seat the habit, which they never get rid of, of holding on by the horse's mouth.

We should all like to have a seat like 'the gentleman of Normandy' of whom Shakespeare says:

*... he grew into his seat  
And to such wondrous doing brought his horse,  
As he had been incorp's'd and demi-natured  
With the brave beast.*

#### CROSS-SADDLE AND SIDE-SADDLE

Girls nowadays almost without exception learn to ride in a cross-saddle. They can change later on if they wish to. The advantages of the cross-saddle are many. It is far more comfortable for the rider, and much less tiring. It is also far more comfortable for the pony. It is much easier to fit; and the weight is about half that of the side-saddle. The cost of riding astride is much less. Cross-saddles and ride-astride clothes cost about half the price of the side-saddle outfit. The cross-saddle rider too can get no end of fun out of a rough pony, whereas a side-saddle rider, if she is to be comfortable, should be really well-mounted. The enormous increase in children's riding to-day is largely due to the disappearance of the prejudice against riding astride for girls. It is almost impossible to imagine a Pony Club rally composed of side-saddle riders, nor would it be easy for such riders to ride grass-kept ponies.

Another important point is that a fall from a side-saddle is likely to be more serious than a fall from a cross-saddle. It is difficult to fall clear from a side-saddle.

The side-saddle rider has two great advantages. She has a very firm seat; a good side-saddle rider never falls off, and never even feels like coming off. Because of this firm seat a good side-saddle rider has also 'light hands', for the two are interdependent. In both these things she is likely to be superior to most cross-saddle riders. The side-saddle still holds its own in the Shires where fences are big and horses too, and the extra cost of first-class grooms and stables is immaterial, but everywhere else it is disappearing; in most country districts it has completely gone. If a girl wishes to ride side-saddle, it is wise to delay learning until she has finished growing. It is very easy to develop spinal curvature in a side-saddle, which is often seen in one hip being slightly higher than the other. To avoid this many girls used to ride sometimes on the near side, sometimes on the off side of their pony. The cost of this would nowadays be prohibitive.

#### THE CROSS-SADDLE SEAT

Look carefully at the children on p. 55; they all have good seats. Try to keep the three following rules:

*Sit down in your saddle*

At first you will not be able to 'sit well down' because your muscles need

moulding to the saddle. Nothing will more quickly get you down in the saddle than riding for a few minutes, each time you go out, without stirrups, either walking or at a slow jog. Without stirrups you slip into the right position. And if you do not much care whether you have stirrups or not, there is probably nothing wrong with your seat. My pupils always enjoyed riding 'stirrupless', as they called it. You can if you like ride on a folded blanket with a surcingle over it. When you are properly 'down in your saddle', your weight will come just behind the pommel, where your pony is strongest. There should be room to lay your hand flat behind you on the saddle. Never sit far back on your saddle; you might injure your pony's loins. Keep your seat well under you, do not let it stick out behind. And ride as 'tall' as you can – never slouch.

#### *Measure your leathers carefully*

In order to find the correct length for your leather, measure it against your arm. Put the tips of the fingers of your left hand on the top of the stirrup-leather where it is attached to the saddle. With your right hand bring the stirrup-iron up underneath your left arm. The bottom of the iron should then reach your armpit; you will find this is about right. Another way of measuring is to ride without stirrups until you are well down in the saddle, and then the bottom bar of the iron should be about level with your ankle-joint. You will feel it knocking against your ankle as you ride along.

#### *Grip with the knees*

The grip comes mostly from the knees. Your knees must always adhere to your pony's sides. Put an envelope between the knee and the saddle and see how long you can keep it there. A beginner is often noticeable, viewed from behind, by the triangular bit of daylight between his knees and the saddle; such a rider is not gripping with his knees but with his calves.

Keep your knees well down and keep your feet parallel with your pony's sides.

If you are hacking, ride with the iron on the ball of the foot. If you are hunting, push the feet home.

The legs should hang straight down, covering the girths, and the knees should be pointed (well bent).

### COMMON FAULTS

#### *Riding with the feet foremost*

Some riders stick their feet forward over their ponies' shoulders, so that their legs do not cover the girths and their knees are straight instead of pointed. (See p. 57) This fault is especially noticeable landing over jumps; some steeplechase jockeys ride in this fashion, but we do not want to model our seats on theirs, but on the seat of a good man to hounds.



*Riding with the head foremost*

This is the opposite fault. The rider cranes forward over the pony's ears, drawing the feet right back, so that anyone riding behind can see the soles of the boots. They ride therefore on their fork instead of sitting down on their sitting-bones in the saddle. This is a very uncomfortable, weak seat. It often seems to be the result of riding a pulling pony.

*Riding with short leathers*

This results in riding perched up like a jockey. With this seat the weight comes too far back.

## LIGHT HANDS

Simultaneously with the attainment of a good seat you will be acquiring 'light hands'. Light hands – hands which are gentle – are dependent on a firm seat, and cannot be had without it.

If you take the trouble to acquire a firm, well-balanced seat by long slow riding, and at the same time treat your horse's mouth with the greatest respect, light hands will be the result. If you ride anyhow, and gallop before you are fit to go out of a walk, while your seat is still insecure, you must necessarily hold on to something, and if you hold on by the reins it becomes a habit and you will ruin your hands. When your seat is sufficiently firm you will have no temptation to hold on by your horse's mouth; you will no longer want to use your hands for anything but their legitimate purpose – guiding and controlling.

Unless your hands are light you will never be able to ride any but very quiet horses. It is the desire of every rider to attain 'light hands', and eventually 'good hands', of which we will speak later.

The horse's mouth is a very tender delicate thing. He will retain 'a soft mouth' throughout his life only if his riders have 'light hands'. If his owner has heavy hands his mouth will soon become hardened.

## HEAVY HANDS

Heavy-handed riders are always pulling at their horses. They are very common and are usually quite unconscious that they are hurting their horses. One can tell whether a rider's hands are light by looking at the pony's mouth; if he seems comfortable all is well.

An inexcusable action is to punish a pony for shying, for example, by giving him a good jerk in the mouth, or for anyone holding a pony to give him a similar jerk in the mouth to make him stand still. Recently I saw a little girl while saddling a very quiet pony give him three such vicious jerks in the course of five minutes.

POSITION OF ARMS AND HANDS

Keep your elbows lightly into your sides and ride with your reins in both hands and your thumbs up. The tips of your fingers should occasionally touch the top buttons of your breeches.

Practise this position indoors with your bridle hung over the back of a chair. You will find that only in this position can you use all the springs of fingers and wrists which you need if you are to have a light touch on your pony's mouth. When you are walking the hands can be dropped towards the pommel of the saddle, and the pony's head can be completely free.

When you trot or canter light contact must be kept with the mouth.

If your reins are long your hands will be light; but they must not be so long that your pony is out of control. If your reins are too short, your hands will be heavy, and the pony has then to carry the weight of your arms on his mouth.

The great jockey Chifney wrote this rhyme. It is full of wisdom—a summary of the whole matter.

*Your head and your heart keep up!  
Your hands and your heels keep down!  
Your knees press into your horse's sides,  
And your elbows into your own.*

## CHAPTER FOUR

# The First Lessons

*The Early Lessons Must be Good – Going up to Your Pony – Mounting and Dismounting – The Reins – To Walk – To Stop – To Trot and Canter – To Turn – Two Useful Exercises*

### THE EARLY LESSONS MUST BE GOOD

THIS chapter is written for children who are at the very beginning of their riding career. Do everything in it as perfectly as you can, before you go on to the next chapter, or you will only get muddled.

The earliest lessons must be as good as possible, so that no bad habits are contracted. Most of us are quite unconscious of our own faults, and it is most important that we should get rid of them before they are habits. After a dozen lessons, you will perhaps make the most progress if you can keep a grass-fed pony and continue your education on him, returning from time to time to your instructor.

The following hints are for those who have not a good instructor at hand.

### GOING UP TO YOUR PONY

Be careful about this; horses are highly nervous, and this makes them sometimes kick out if they unexpectedly find someone at their heels. They do this from nervousness and not with the object of kicking their owner. If your pony is out at grass, call to him cheerfully, hold out some tit-bit and approach by way of his shoulder. If he is in a stall, speak to him and tell him to 'get over', and then walk straight up to his head.

### MOUNTING AND DISMOUNTING

To mount, stand near the pony's shoulder, facing towards his tail, and place the left hand on his withers, catching hold of a bit of mane. Put the left toe in the stirrup. Place the right hand over the seat of the saddle as far over as you can reach. Spring off the right toe until you are balanced over the saddle, then throw your right leg gently over. Do not dig your left toe into the pony's side as you mount or you will make him fidgety. Do it all as lightly as you can or you will annoy him. It is unwise to catch hold of either the pommel or the cantle of the saddle or you may shift it. It is important not to do this, for if the pony's coat is ruffled under the saddle he will be uncomfortable. Moreover a careless horseman sometimes pulls the saddle right over. This would certainly upset a nervous pony.

To dismount, take the right foot out of the stirrup and reverse these movements until you are on the ground.



THE PONY MUST BE CARE-  
FULLY CHOSEN, EXERCISED  
AND FED SO AS TO SUIT  
THE CHILD

*A promising little rider mounted on a pony which suits her, and on which she feels secure enough to give attention to the way she sits and the way she holds her hands.*



*A pony who is a little too much for his rider, who has all she can do to control him. He is very nearly out of hand and needs a more experienced rider to balance him and make him stop pulling. Less oats and more work would probably make the two well suited to each other.*





#### STARTING OUT FOR A RIDE

*Start at a walk, and pay strict attention to your own pony. These children are suitably mounted on quiet ponies which are not too big for them.*

## THE REINS

Learners should always use a snaffle if possible. It is much simpler for them to understand, and much simpler for the pony too. The snaffle may have one rein or two; one is the best because it is the simplest.

Hold the reins in two hands and not in one. (See the child at the bottom of p. 27). The signals which you give to the horse will then be plain and easy for him to understand.

You will notice that all breakers and all hunting people and race-riders invariably use two hands. The reason that one man can get on well with young half-broken horses and another cannot is that one gives plain signals to his mount and the other does not. The root of the trouble lies in vague signals, often from reins held in one hand. When you start jumping you will find that in order to hold your pony straight at his fences you must have two hands on the reins. The one-handed method used to be essential in the Army when a man needed his right hand to use his sword, and it is still essential for polo players. But the signals given by inexperienced one-handed riders are often vague. The other day I saw a girl beginner at a cross-road. She wanted to turn left. Her reins were all bunched in her left hand; her signals were deficient, and there was a pause of some seconds before her very willing horse guessed which way she wanted to go. Another common error with one-handed riders is that they often carry their left hand unconsciously towards the left, and one sees unfortunate horses forced to carry their heads to the left in obedience to the rein. If in spite of this they can keep on their legs, all credit is due to them.

Pick the right rein up in the right hand using the whole hand. The rein should run from the pony's mouth to the outside of the little finger and come out between the thumb and first finger. Do the same with the left hand. Be careful that the rein is not twisted. If a second rein is used, it should enter the hand between the second and third fingers and come out where the other does.

Always use the reins with the greatest delicacy. Remember that the mouth is very sensitive, and that nothing hurts a pony more than a tug at his mouth. If you should feel at all unsteady in your seat there is no harm in steadying yourself by taking hold of the mane or the pommel.

Do not be in too great a hurry; riding, like all things worth doing, takes time; and all good riders have been through a long apprenticeship. People who learn in a hurry never acquire either a good seat or good hands, and many promising riders have been spoilt in this way.

## TO WALK

Speak to your pony and squeeze him with the sides of your drawn-back legs. He cannot walk well unless you leave his head quite loose, so that he can swing it

as he likes. You must not speak to him when with other horses, or you upset them.

Never let him 'jog'. This is a pace halfway between a walk and a trot. Horses are partial to it, but riders should never allow it because it ruins the walk.

#### TO STOP

When you want to stop your pony, pull very gently, as if the reins were rotten and you were afraid of breaking them; steadily increase the pull until he stops, then release the pressure immediately and he will understand that he has done what you wanted. This is the great law of 'take and give' which runs throughout horsemanship: you 'take' until he yields and then immediately you 'give' as a reward.

#### TO TROT AND CANTER

To trot, shorten the reins and apply the legs. Oxfordshire children call trotting 'bumping the saddle'. The bumping will soon stop; the beginner will find that after a little while he learns to rise in time with the trot, so that trotting is very pleasant. This will come without any special effort.

When you want to canter, lean slightly forward and speak to your pony. It is wise to choose a slight uphill gradient for the first canter.

#### TO TURN

It is important to remember when we are turning our pony, say, to the right, that we must use both hands working in harmony together.

Carry your hands to the right so that the right rein pulls, and the left rein is applied against the pony's neck. The beginner's method is to use one rein alone, and though the pony will turn when pulled by one rein, he turns very badly.

To turn to the left do the opposite.

#### TWO USEFUL EXERCISES

The following exercises will improve your hands and result in a better understanding between you and your pony.

##### *Starting and stopping*

Practise this riding down a quiet lane or round a field. Try to get your pony to start off steadily without becoming hurried or upset, and to stop smoothly and gently.

Speak to your pony and start him with your legs; advance about twelve steps and halt. Pat him for his obedience and then start off again and halt. Repeat this

three or four times. When you have got him as smooth and understanding as you can, try the same thing trotting. If he does not obey your legs, give him a tap with the whip when you want to start him, just behind his girths, and he will soon learn.

### Turning

Find a quiet place in a field; it should be rather bigger than a tennis court. Mark out a circle with half a dozen stones or sticks, and walk round it to the right, 'on the right rein', two or three times. (See Fig. II).

Then change around and go round 'on the left rein'. Keep your elbows quite still and try to get your inside rein pulling gently and your outside rein pushing gently against the pony's neck. If there are two riders, this exercise is more interesting; start one at each side of the circle, and go opposite ways; never follow or you learn nothing.

Later on you can mark out two adjoining circles which will make a figure of eight. Follow around one in just the same way, 'on the right rein', and when you come to the centre change over to the other circle and continue 'on the left rein'. (See Fig. III). This can be done later on at a trot.

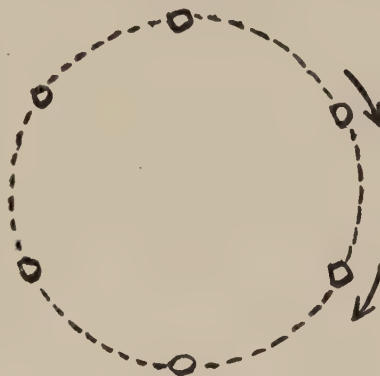


FIG. II. RIDING ON THE RIGHT REIN

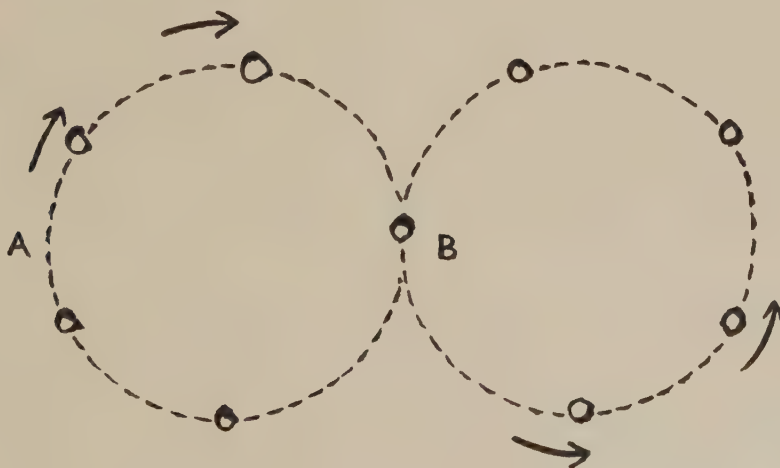


FIG. III. FIGURE OF EIGHT

*A. Start here and follow the dotted line 'on the right rein'.*

*B. At B, change on to the left rein and follow the second circle. This can be done later on at a trot.*



The exercises in this chapter form the foundation for those in Chapter V. It will take you a long time before you can do them correctly – three weeks, perhaps, riding three days a week. If you hurry on to the next chapter before you are ready for it, you will only get thoroughly muddled. Please miss the next chapter, therefore, unless you feel quite ready for it, and go on to Chapter VI.

## CHAPTER FIVE

# How to get Good Hands

*The Signals, or 'Aids' – Good Hands – The Rider's Legs – Harmony of Hands and Legs – The Weight of the Rider's Body – The Length of the Reins*

### THE SIGNALS, OR 'AIDS'

THOSE, and only those, who have taken in the lessons in the last chapter will now be able to advance. Do not think that you will be able to do all the things in this chapter at once. Take them in order, and when the right method has become second nature to you, go on to the next. Do not bore your pony with too many of these exercises; he will get tired before you do. A quarter of an hour at a time when you go out riding is quite long enough to spend on exercises; you must have plenty of riding straight ahead in between.

The object of these exercises is to improve your hands and, at the same time, to teach your pony. They are all exercises taught to every horse by every good breaker. But all breakers are not good. Many do not know their business and your pony may never have been taught at all. Moreover, even if he has been thoroughly well taught he will soon deteriorate unless you, his rider, always use the signals or 'aids' which he has been taught to obey. The signals are used to inform your pony of what you want him to do. You cannot say to him 'Turn right', because he does not understand your language. But you can teach him that the hands carried to the right and a touch of the left leg mean 'turn right'. If you teach him properly, obedience becomes second nature and he will always obey you. You can then establish a secret code between yourself and your pony so that you easily get willing obedience. Without this code you and your mount will constantly be at cross purposes; he will only half understand what you want, or he may misunderstand you altogether.

Once you have mastered this code you will be able to use it not only with your own pony but with every horse you can get on to. You will find that some of your mounts thoroughly understand it, and some do not.

These signals are usually called 'the aids'. They are given by the rider's hands, which control the pony's forehand, and by the rider's legs, which control his hindquarters. You must pay special attention to using your legs, for not only does the rider find it much more difficult to use his legs than to use his hands, but the pony also finds it harder to understand the meaning of the leg signals.

A third signal and an important one is given by the weight of the rider's body.

You will soon find that some ponies, especially those of thoroughbred blood, are extremely sensitive, and the signals must therefore be used sensitively.

The practice of the five following exercises, until they become second nature, will put the rider on the right road to attaining that understanding with his horse which is generally called 'Good Hands'. A rider with good hands is one who uses the correct signals, and gives them so clearly that the horse cannot fail to understand, and so gently that he is not irritated.

### *To Turn*

Practise turning your pony to the right riding round a field. Imagine a circle big enough to contain a horse and cart and walk round and round it. *Lead the forehand round with the right rein supported by the left against the neck. Close the left leg to prevent the quarters flying out. Lean the body slightly to the right.* If you succeed in doing all these things your meaning is so clear to the pony that the most ignorant will obey you. Use your hands very lightly; you never want in turning to see more than your pony's eye. Some beginners see his eye and all his head and neck coming right round before the hindlegs follow suit. This is wrong, and the result of too much hand and too little leg.

In a short time, all this will come quite naturally. The turns to the left are just the opposite.

When you can do both of these, imagine to yourself a big figure of eight on the ground and follow it round, changing the aids, where the two circles meet.

Later on try these same exercises trotting. The pony's hindlegs must follow the exact track of his forelegs. Be careful not to bore your mount; he has feelings much like yours, and resents doing the same dull thing over and over again. Use your brains, therefore, to find variety, *e.g.* find a group of trees and turn him round them in and out, first a bend right, then a bend left. Vary this by circling right round one tree to the right and then right round the next to the left. There are dozens of things you can invent, and practise, until you and your mount get to understand each other more and more and have but one mind between you. Be sure to use your hands very lightly and your outside leg strongly. You will observe these 'aids' are diagonal, *e.g.* right rein and left leg.

### *Teaching the pony to obey the leg*

Notice your pony when he is tied up in the stable. The groom stands up near his head, puts his hand on his hindquarters and says, 'Get over', and the pony moves his quarters away from the pressure. Make your pony do this yourself, first away from the near side, and then from the off side.

The following exercise is just the same thing. It has first to be done dismounted. The pony has got to learn that when your stick or your heel touches him behind the girth he has got to move his hindquarters away. *Stand on the near – that is the*

*left – side of your pony. Hold the near rein in your left hand. With your stick tap your pony behind the girth, just where your left heel comes, and at the same time pull the rein gently. If you do it correctly he cannot help moving his hindquarters one step away from you. Reward him at once with a few oats. When he thoroughly understands, gradually teach him to obey the stick alone without any help from the pull of the rein, so that you can hold his head straight and make him move his hindquarters.*

This exercise not only makes him more obedient to the leg, but it also teaches you how to place him if you want him in some special position. It is not enough to be able to put his forehead where you want it, you must also be able to control his hindquarters. One often sees riders who want to mount more easily, bring their horses' heads up to a bank, but they are no better off unless they can control the hindquarters too and place them.

You must be very gentle over this exercise. If your pony gets excited it shows you are being too violent. If he resents the stick, use the palm of your hand instead, and pat him after each step, or he may think he is being punished. If he runs away from the stick – half a dozen steps instead of one – that is not obedience. You want to ask for one step only and get it. You cannot be too gentle; you must give him and yourself time to think. It is hopeless to try and teach him unless you thoroughly understand yourself what you are trying to do.

### *To Rein Back*

This is excellent practice for both rider and pony; it should improve the rider's hands and teach the pony to obey the rein and to balance himself. Try it first dismounted. *Stand right in front of your pony, facing him. Take a rein in each hand, a few inches away from the snaffle-ring. Press gently on the reins, saying 'back' at the same time. At each step back, slacken the reins and reward him with a handful of oats.* If he finds it difficult to understand, tread gently on his fetlocks as you press the reins and he will generally step back. Never let him run back; this would do more harm than good, and would show that you were being too violent. One or two steps with a pause between each one is enough. When you understand each other try the same thing mounted. Take a gentle pull and the moment he makes a step backwards slacken the reins. When he has completed his two steps backward, drive him on again at once with your legs.

### *To Walk or Trot*

*Close both legs, and ease both reins slightly. As soon as the pony advances at the desired pace relax the pressure of the legs and feel the reins as required.*

### *To Stop*

*Close both legs and then feel both reins, at the same time bringing the weight of the body slightly back. As soon as the horse halts, relax the pressure of the legs and the feeling of the*



*reins*. Riders who pull the reins and do not use their legs when they want to stop are wrong; the result of this practice is that the pony uses his forelegs alone. What he should do, and will do if we use our legs properly, is to bring his hindlegs up and stop with their help.

#### GOOD HANDS

The rider must practise these exercises until they become second nature, and the signals are given automatically; there is no other way of attaining good, *i.e.* well-trained, hands. When you can make your pony do them nicely, you will have made a great advance; remember always to be slow, quiet and gentle, and to reward him for obedience, so that he does not become irritated or down-hearted. You should both enjoy doing these exercises. If either of you get bothered or cross you will make no progress. The pony will derive great benefit from going through a course of these exercises from time to time; for instance, when he has not been ridden for some time, or if he has been behaving badly.

It is often said that 'good hands', by which is meant the power, which some people have, of obtaining willing obedience from every horse they ride, are 'a gift'. But it is my belief that this gift is within reach of most of us, if only we will take trouble in our early lessons to study how to use our hands and legs correctly.

But it is this study that people find so very difficult. Or perhaps it is that when reading hastily it all looks easy and the reader thinks he knows it all, and never gives it sufficient thought. Whatever the reason may be I can assure readers that the number of people who give their horses the correct signals is a small one. Those who have tried to teach horses and human beings this code of signals in the endeavour to give them a common language through which they may understand each other are, I believe, agreed that it is far easier to teach the horse than the man. Human beings learn quickly and forget equally quickly; horses learn slowly, but they do not forget.

Those who will not take the trouble to master this code will frequently be in difficulties with their horses, and will never be able to ride any but the quietest and most docile. A high-spirited horse naturally resents having a wrong or an inadequate signal given him, especially when he is blamed for obeying it, as he frequently is. In the hands of such untrained riders every horse deteriorates. The commonest fault of such riders is that they use their hands and forget to use their legs.

Another common fault, and a very bad one, is to give signals with hands or legs that have no meaning; this is commonly called 'working the arms and legs'. I do not know why beginners so often do this; some work their legs unceasingly, and their pony gets so bewildered that after a bit he takes no notice at all. Some work their hands at every step their pony takes; I believe they do it from a mis-

taken idea that they are somehow helping him. But we cannot sit too still unless we want to give a signal.

The good rider gives his horse as few signals as possible: but when he does give a signal it must be followed by a definite response. The time spent in learning these aids will never be wasted, for the better we can apply them ourselves the more quickly will we be able to train any horse we get on to. And if we have a horse who is 'difficult' we shall be able to make him thoroughly obedient.

No real progress can be made until this ABC is learnt, but once it is learnt progress will be rapid. I cannot warn riders too strongly against being in too great a hurry. There is a tendency today to scamp foundations in all things and build upon shifting sands; but without sound foundations the building will be insecure, and this principle applies to riding as to everything else. One hears people talking of teaching their ponies to change their legs at the canter or showing them where to take off at their fences, when what they really need is steady practice of the ABC of riding until misunderstanding of the signals between themselves and their mounts is impossible. Many people get on with their riding pretty well until they come across a horse who, shall we say, pulls a little, or is inclined to refuse his fences; they then find that if they are to cure him they must go right back to their ABC. It is far better to start at the beginning and make steady progress.

#### THE RIDER'S LEGS

All good riders use their legs a great deal; it is impossible to ride a horse properly unless you control his hindlegs as well as his forelegs, and when you can do this you will have no trouble with your mounts. The exercises above will teach you the use of hand and leg quicker than anything else.

The commonest trouble with a pony who has been ridden by beginners is that he does not obey the rider's legs. Or, to look at it another way, that he does not use *his* hindlegs properly and does most of his work with his forehead. If you teach him the exercise for obeying the leg, he will soon improve. From this exercise he learns that when we touch him with one leg he is to step aside from the pressure. It also teaches him that when we apply both legs he is to bring his hindlegs well under him and go forward more smartly. If our pony is lazy and does not obey when we apply our legs, we must tap him sharply with our stick just behind the girths at the same time as we apply them, and he will soon learn to obey when the legs alone are used.

Riding on the hills the other day I saw a groom, leading a small beginner, followed by a girl on a stout cob. The girl behind could not get her cob along, but got farther and farther behind, until there seemed almost a quarter of a mile between herself and the others. The thing to do with a bad walker like this is to leave his head quite loose, and apply your legs. If he obeys, then all is well, and

leave him alone. If he takes no notice give him a sharp tap with your whip just behind the girths where your leg comes.

The ability to make a pony walk out is a great test of 'hands'. And for this reason walking races are valuable, for they are the only sort of races which can be depended on to improve ponies and riders.

#### HARMONY OF HANDS AND LEGS

The rider must learn to use hands and legs in harmony with each other. Most people use their hands a great deal too strongly and their legs not strongly enough. This harmony is quickest learnt by practising thoughtfully the backing exercise. If carefully done one gets the feeling that one can rock the pony forward or back with a light touch between the hands and the legs.

Neither hands nor legs should ever be used harshly; the more highly trained your pony the more sensitive will he become to hand and leg. The looker-on should not be able to see what the rider is doing, or that he is doing anything.

The amount of hand and of leg required varies too with every pony one rides; and so the rider must learn to use his legs and his hands in accordance with the nature of his mount. Some ponies need a great deal of leg. You will find that some are lazy and need so much leg that they are very tiring to ride. One has to 'create impulsion' the whole time. Others are so full of life – such 'free-movers' – that they can hardly bear to be touched at all with the leg; such ponies are usually brilliant performers and are much the pleasantest to ride, but they need a good rider. The most generally useful type of pony comes half-way between these two.

A good rider gets his pony so sensitive that he will answer to the lightest signals. Some polo-ponies are so highly trained that they seem to answer one's thought. A bad rider, on the other hand, makes his pony more and more callous to the signals. Such a rider sometimes thinks that a severe bit or a pair of spurs will help him, but this is an illusion.

At first the signals will be given too roughly, but one learns by degrees to apply them more sensitively. This lack of delicacy is likely to upset a well-bred and well-broken horse and make him a dangerous mount for beginners; for a highly trained horse is an extremely sensitive animal. There is a valuable French saying, 'Refine your aids'.

The very quiet first pony sometimes gives the beginner wrong impressions on this point of sensitiveness from which he may have a rude awakening. A child who had ridden nothing but a very quiet grass-fed pony went to try another which was really very suitable for her, because she was getting on with her riding and needed a pony with more life. This pony was the opposite to her own. He was well-mannered, but stabled and very keen. She got on to him in the drive and dug her heels into him in the manner to which she had been accustomed. He



thought she meant him to gallop, and he fled down the drive as hard as he could lay legs to the ground. She was thoroughly frightened, got off him and refused to get on again. Her signals were too rough; she needed to 'refine her aids'.

#### THE WEIGHT OF THE RIDER'S BODY

This important signal must be used in addition to the others. It is easy, for example, to teach a horse to turn right by simply swinging your body to the right, or to stop by leaning back.

Remember always to use *all* the signals (aids) – the hands, the legs, and the weight of the body.

#### THE LENGTH OF THE REINS

The reins must be long, but not so long that you lose contact with your pony's mouth. The correct length of rein can only be maintained by holding the hands in the correct position with elbows to the sides and the tips of the fingers occasionally touching the body. Your hands will then be light.

If the reins are too short with the hands pushed forward 'like a leg of mutton' the hands will be heavy and the pony will have on his mouth the weight of the rider's arms and shoulders. The rule for driving is just the same; elbows into the sides and the tips of the fingers occasionally touching the body. If you look at the pictures of the old 'bus drivers' in London, who were fine coachmen, you will see how carefully they maintained this position.

It is not easy to find and to keep the correct length; it needs a great deal of practice. If the reins are too long the pony will be constantly getting 'out of hand' (out of control) and increasing the pace, or he may get his head down and buck. If the reins are too short the pony will probably show his irritation by throwing up his head or jogging, or even by rearing. If he does either of these things lengthen the reins a fraction and try and get your feeling on his mouth lighter.

One of my pupils was at this stage riding with reins either too tight or too slack, when in the course of our ride we came to a very steep path leading downwards – excellent practice for beginners. I told the children to shorten their reins. They needed a lead – beginners' mounts are apt to stop dead at a place like this – so I went first, and down came the pupils after me, ponies slithering and pupils squeaking with excitement. On arrival at the bottom one child was missing – anxious moment! What could have happened? I hurried back. There at the top of the hill was the child, a little anxious, and Robin, her obedient little pony, backing steadily uphill. His rider had shortened the reins a bit too much and he was doing his best to obey.



## Head-Carriage and Balance

THE pony's head should be carried fairly high; he can then do his work well, and be under perfect control.

Low head-carriage is very common in children's ponies and results in pulling, bucking, prematurely worn-out forelegs, and general difficulty and discomfort for pony and rider.

Here are four things which will help to raise the head.

### *Good condition*

This can only be attained by good feeding and steady work. Many children do not feed their grass-kept ponies sufficiently well.

### *A snaffle bridle*

This tends to raise the head. A double bridle unless skilfully used will lower it. If you want to put your pony in a double bridle or a pelham be sure that his head is high enough before you do so.

### *Never allow your pony to 'bore'*

This means, you must never allow him to lean the weight of his head on your hands. If he does this he feels as if he is using his head as a fifth leg. This is a common form of pulling and is the result of bad balance. The pony who has too much weight in front cannot help boring. To stop this, insist on him trotting or galloping more slowly. If this has no effect pull him up as gently as you can and make him do the backing exercise, advancing twelve steps and backing one. You should be able to persuade him to step back at a touch. Do this, not as a punishment but as a means of getting him into the right position.

### *Never allow him to go beyond his pace*

Every pony has his own pace at which he can go properly balanced. If he is asked to go beyond this pace, in the effort perhaps to keep up with other riders, he will become unbalanced. The pace chosen should, therefore, be the pace of the slowest mount, and not of the fastest.

When the head is properly carried the pony is well-balanced, *i.e.* his weight is correctly balanced between his forehead and his hindquarters. In this form he can do his work most easily.

The pony's conformation must be studied, and the right height is that at which he does his work most easily. If your pony is of Moorland blood, a good guide to

his head-carriage would be to observe the Greek ponies depicted on the Elgin marbles, who are much like our own Moorland-bred ponies. Their heads are exactly in the right position.

At the present time when the horse is used not only for real work, as in hunting, but largely for show, there is a tendency to get the head too high. The result of this is that the horse no longer has freedom of action, he can no longer 'use himself' to the best advantage and his paces become exaggerated and unnatural.

Balance is the key to good horsemanship. Once you are able to balance your pony, most of the difficulties in riding will disappear. Your pony will look better, and be much pleasanter to ride. He will be much more obedient. He will do more work without getting tired. You will be able to make him go your pace and not his own – trotting, cantering or galloping; and you will be able to present him at his fences with his hocks well under him so that it will be easy for him to jump.

Always buy a pony who carries himself well; it is one of the most important things to look for. Many ponies have low head-carriage because they have never been properly broken, or have been badly ridden, or overworked, or wrongly bitted, or underfed. This fault is very difficult to correct.

But however well your pony carries himself, his carriage can be easily ruined by careless treatment, and his value will then be depreciated by quite one half.

There seem to be a few people – a very few – who can balance a horse immediately they get on to it. One sees amazing things done with young or awkward horses by army rough-riders, by our best breakers, or by nagsmen in the big dealers' yards. But most of us have to observe and study hard before we make any advance in this difficult art. Our forefathers used to say: 'A good rider is one who always has his horse's head in the right position.'

If you buy a well-balanced pony you should be able to keep him right, but you will need a great deal of experience before you can improve a badly balanced pony. It is far easier to balance a keen pony than a very quiet one: and, when children get on a little and have ridden for a year or two, they will be much happier on such a pony. If they feed their own quiet pony rather better he will become keener and respond to a course of the exercises in the last chapter, which all help to balance him.

Do not be down-hearted if you find it difficult to balance your pony. It needs considerable experience, but the more you keep it in mind the sooner you will attain the desired end. Nothing is needed but more understanding on your part of how to apply the aids, and more understanding on his of how to answer them. The three exercises, turning, backing, and teaching the pony to obey the leg, will do all that is necessary. The beginner's aids are invariably applied too strongly at first; no strength is needed but only more understanding between the rider and his pony.

Children who use snaffle bridles will find it easy to keep their ponies' heads in the right position.

Older riders who want to know more about 'the aids' would do well to study *Horse-sense and Horsemanship of To-day*, by General Geoffrey Brooke, or *Sympathetic Training of Horse and Man*, by Major T. S. Paterson, or *School for Horse and Rider*, by Major Hance.

All these writers, though they may vary in detail, teach the same method – the method which was taught in the British Cavalry in the first quarter of this century. This system was an excellent one and turned out many first-class horse-men. It also turned out first-class horses.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

# Out for a Ride

*Where to Ride – Avoid Main Roads – The ‘Going’ – The Pony’s Paces – Choosing Your Own Path – Steep Places – Company – Amount of Work Needed – The Farmer’s Fields – The Wild West – Jumping – Old Sporting Prints: the Theory of Lifting – The Jumping Course*

### WHERE TO RIDE

THE pony likes variety and seeing the world; he wants to be amused and interested. He is less likely to acquire tricks if you take him a definite round, than if you go just out and back again the same way. It is also very trying to a pony’s temper to be trotted up and down the same field over and over again while beginners take their ‘turns’, and only a very good-natured pony will stand it for long.

Most people are vague as to the capabilities of their own district. In my own neighbourhood people often say ‘there is nowhere to ride’ – and it certainly is true that there are remarkably few riders to be seen on the excellent bridlepaths round about. The best thing to do is to buy an Ordnance Survey map, one mile to the inch, and find out the various ways.

All country lovers should see to it that they have a local society to look after the rights of way in their neighbourhood. Now that the roads have lost all their charms for anyone but the motorist, these paths are of much greater value than they were before. Most districts have paths which are in dispute, and old inhabitants can always tell one of paths once public but now so no longer. These local societies can be affiliated to the parent one in London, and their way is thereby made easier. It is comparatively easy to keep watch over a path and keep it open, but very hard to reopen it once it has been blocked for some years.

### AVOID MAIN ROADS

The main roads are now absolutely unfit for horses on account of their extreme slipperiness, which has injured and killed many horses and riders. Beginners who trot down macadamized roads at eight miles an hour do not realize that they may slip down at any moment. They are bad for horses, too, on account of their hardness. Remember the old saying:

*It is not hunting on the hill  
That hurts the horse’s feet,  
But hammer, hammer, hammer  
On the hard high road.*



This is even truer now than when it was written. The roads are far too hard for the delicate mechanism of the horse's legs and feet, and horses who are much used on them have a short life. Not only so, but their legs get stiff and their action ruined, so that there is no pleasure in riding them. For these reasons wise people avoid main roads whenever possible.

Riders and drivers consider that they have been unfairly treated. They have been driven off the roads which were originally made for them. A grass track four feet wide by the side of the road would make all the difference in the world.

If motorists knew how nervous horses are, they would refrain from the thoughtless acts which make the horse's and horseman's life on the slippery main roads beset with unnecessary horrors. Many motorists betray appalling ignorance where horses are concerned. 'If only,' we say, 'we could send them three miles down a main road on a nervous four-year-old, they would mend their ways.'

We have, however, some places left to us, and all motorists who have a sense of justice will join with horsemen in protest against those of the motoring fraternity who use soft footpaths and grass tracks for 'trying' their cars. The motorists have successfully usurped the use of the roads, and it is unjust that they should destroy too the last haunts of peace – downland, moor, grassy path, and quiet country lane, which are the only places left for the horseman and pedestrian to enjoy.

#### THE 'GOING'

What the horse likes is soft going; a few inches of mud are nothing to him, and he will happily canter along through places which are far too heavy going to give any pleasure to the walker. When the going is hard you must go slowly, either walking or at a slow jog. Be careful in frosty weather; the danger comes not only from slipperiness but also from the hard going where a pony may easily hurt himself. Ponies are best left at home in hard weather. If they are stabled, a straw ring should be laid down and they should be exercised round it. If they are 'out' they exercise themselves.

#### THE PONY'S PACES

*Then hey for boot and horse, lad!  
And round the world away!  
Young blood will have its course, lad!  
And every dog his day!*

C. KINGSLEY

Start off slowly and make sure that you are both comfortable; have your stirrups long enough, but not so long that you keep losing them, and tighten the girths if necessary after you have been out a few minutes.

Walking is the most important of the paces. A pony who has a good walk has



A WELL MOUNTED PARTY

*The ponies are of the Moorland type. They fit their riders well, and are well suited to them.*



#### LEARNING TO JUMP

*The take-off. Make up a low jump, about eighteen inches high, of bracken, or pea-sticks, or two bundles of straw laid end to end, or a bar like this. Lean well forward like this child with your hands well down, and grip with your knees.*

*The landing. If you lean well forward as you take off, you will land without a jar like this child. You can hold on to a bit of mane if you like, or to a stirrup leather buckled loosely round your pony's neck.*





## A GOOD JUMP

*Note these good points:*

- (1) *The pony's mouth is comfortable.*
- (2) *The rider is leaning forward, 'going with the pony'.*
- (3) *His hands are down.*
- (4) *His legs cover the girths and his knees are pointed.*

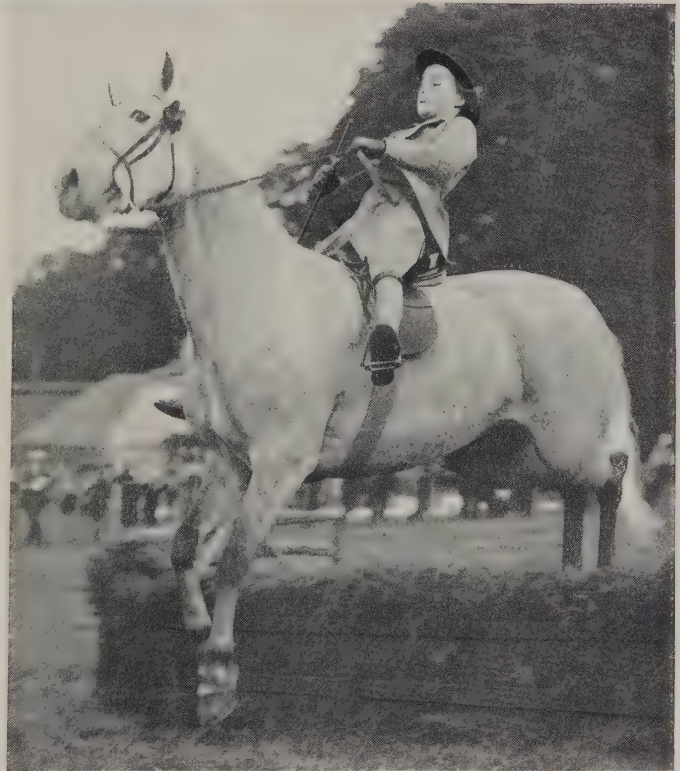


## A BAD JUMP

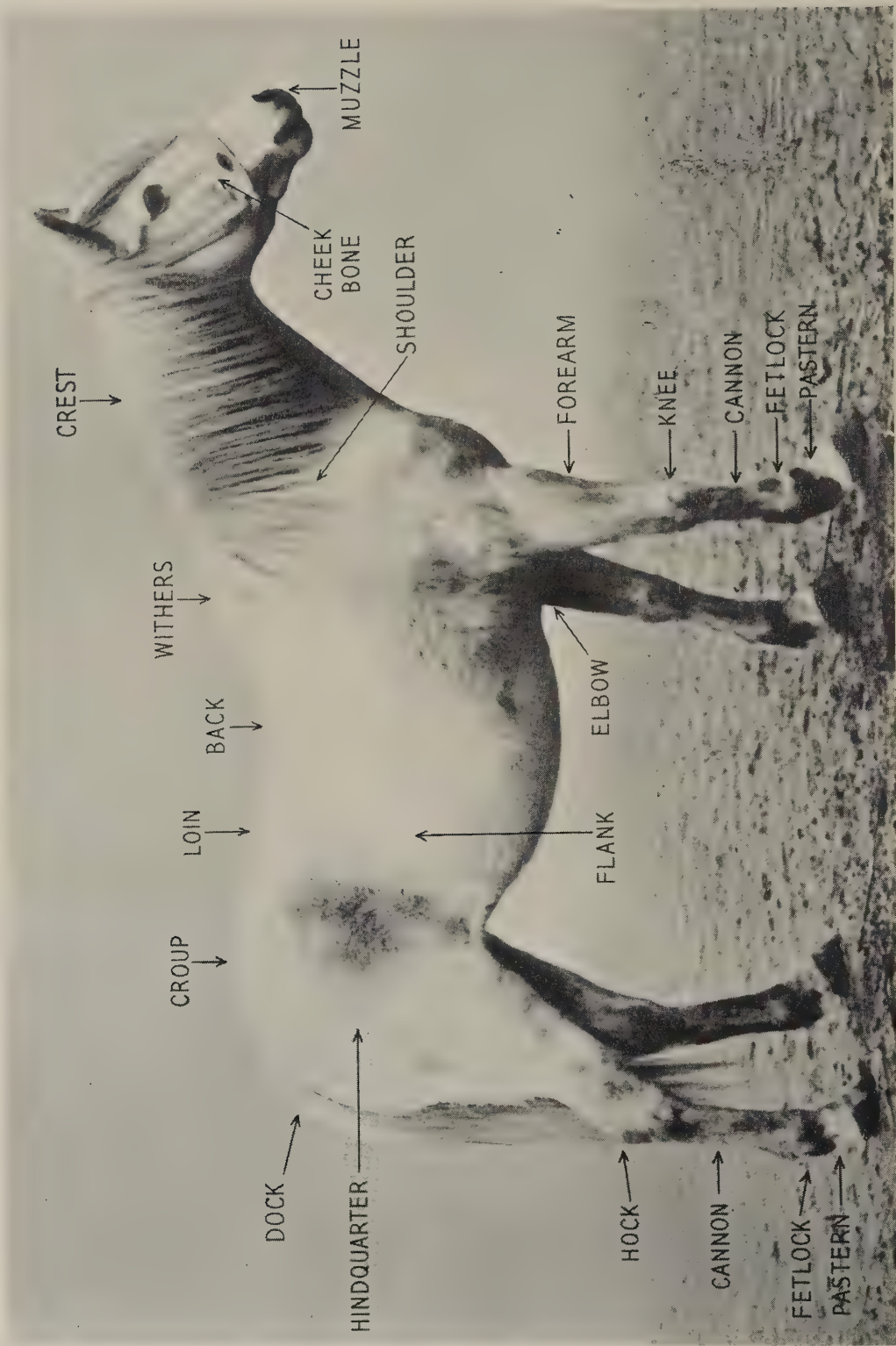
*Compare these bad points:*

- (1) *The pony's mouth is uncomfortable.*
- (2) *The rider is leaning backwards and has been 'left behind'.*
- (3) *His hands are up.*
- (4) *His legs are stuck forward over the pony's shoulders and his knees are straight.*

*The pony is far too big for this rider; note where the sole of his boot comes compared to that of the rider above, who fits his pony well.*







#### THE POINTS OF A PONY

*This is a New Forest pony. Note her typical short pony head, wide above and narrow at the muzzle, her short, pricked ears and clean fetlocks, and her pretty short mouth, unspoilt by a rider dragging at it.*

usually also a good trot and a good gallop. He is a 'free mover' (*i.e.*, willing and keen to work) and full of courage, and these things are of the greatest importance. A pony who will stride away with you at four miles an hour, stepping well out and full of life, is a joy to ride, and even a ride at only a walking pace is a pleasure. On the other hand, a pony who walks sluggishly and needs kicking along is both dull and tiring. He saves himself instead of 'giving himself' and is of the type which is apt to shy badly if a bird flies out of the hedge. The walk of a pony of this sort is so dull that the rider in order to avoid it is constantly tempted to break into a trot or gallop. Ponies need a good deal of teaching before they will walk well. They need a rider with 'hands' who can make them walk out. Their heads must be left free, and the rider must use his legs judiciously.

A good trot is a delightful pace and one that in these days is very much neglected. A large number of hunters and thoroughbred horses are unable to trot well; fortunately many ponies are excellent trotters. Trot steadily at about six miles an hour 'hound's pace'. Never exceed this pace on a hard road or you will ruin your pony's legs and feet. Try and keep your pony well-balanced, moving level without putting too much weight in front.

A good rider can make his pony trot slowly. This is a matter of 'good hands'. The beginner is betrayed by his butcher-boy trot – as hard as his pony can lay legs to the ground – pounding down the road with too much weight on his forelegs.

If your pony is too fresh keep him trotting steadily for a mile or two. One long trot is much more steadying than two shorter ones. Nothing is more likely to throw a pony down than trotting downhill on a rough road.

If the going is soft and firm you can occasionally let your pony trot right out as fast as he can go. A good swinging trot is a delightful pace, and one at which many native ponies excel. He must be well-balanced and light on your hands or the trot will be 'butcher-boy', as I described above.

When your path leads across a couple of green fields with nice soft going, take your chance of a canter. Pull your pony a little more together and speak to him, and off you go. If your pony pulls, take care that the ground is not sloping downhill just where you want to stop. It is much easier to stop on a slight uphill. Never loosen your reins either for trotting or cantering; keep a gentle feeling on the mouth which will hold your pony together, and keep at a steady even pace. If you are riding under trees keep well away from overhanging branches, or you may get a knock on the head or be swept out of the saddle.

#### CHOOSING YOUR OWN PATH

Always pick your pony's ground for him as far as you can. Do not allow him to follow other ponies if you can help it, but make him take a line of his own. He

will always follow if he is allowed to, but you must remember that you are the captain of the ship, and he should be on the look-out for your signals.

A pony, too, has a strange fancy for walking on the worst part of a road full of ruts, and for choosing the extreme edge of the steep paths, etc., and he is not so safe there as he would have you believe. He is quite likely to slip into a rut and give you and himself a nasty jar. If, however, you suddenly find yourself in the midst of some unexpected danger, such as gaping rabbit holes, do not interfere with him, leave his head quite loose, sit perfectly still, and he will extricate you if it is possible; in a place of this sort it is wiser to leave all to him.

#### STEEP PLACES

It is good practice to ride up the steepest places you can find. Your pony can get up or down any place which you can manage on foot without the use of your hands. Going up, take a good hold of his mane, to prevent the saddle slipping back, and lean right forward. Coming down, keep him quite straight, and then if he slips he will only slide on to his haunches. If he slipped when going sideways he might roll over. But horses are far safer going down steep places than their riders think.

#### COMPANY

Always ride one behind the other on a main road. This gives you room to keep a little way from the traffic. Try and keep an even distance – say two or three yards – behind the rider in front; never – if he stops suddenly – allow your pony to run into him. If his pony were nervous this would make him kick, but even were he not nervous he dislikes it. When you get into the country, ride side by side if you can.

Remember to keep an eye on other people's ponies as well as your own. You have a definite duty to them; accidents are easily caused by thoughtlessness about this. Supposing you notice that someone else's pony is getting excited, your own manner of riding will make all the difference. If you ride wildly, or too fast or too close, the excitable pony may get out of hand altogether; if you ride very carefully and slowly until you see he is all right, you will help him and his rider to settle down. Again, supposing that someone opens a gate for you, wait until he has shut the gate up and remounted. Do not ride on before that or you may make his pony so excited that he cannot mount.

Be very careful, too, not to spoil your pony for other people's use. It is the easiest thing in the world to teach a pony bad tricks; he will learn them very quickly and never forget them, so that it is easy to make him unsuitable for inexperienced riders. Never, therefore, allow him to get into the way of practising the following bad habits:



Starting off before the rider is properly settled in his saddle; snatching at grass and leaves as he passes them; bucking when he reaches some definite spot or at some signal from the rider; racing off full gallop at some definite place; dashing into a gallop down the last bit of a grassy hillside and up the other side. All these things, and many others, which you will be able to think of, may be amusing for you as the rider, but they are bad for the pony's morals, and though they are very easily learnt they are uncommonly hard to cure.

Ponies go more cheerfully in company, but it is unwise to go with people who ride wildly, as your mount will soon become as unmannerly as theirs. Try and find companions who ride carefully and study their ponies, and you will learn a lot from each other. Do not, however, take your pony so often in company that he goes badly alone, and do not let him get into the habit of following others. Both you and your pony will be much happier if you are independent.

If your pony suddenly goes lame, he may have picked up a stone. Get off and look in each forefoot. You may see a stone wedged between his frog and the shoe. If so, you can generally hook it out with the end of your hunting-crop.

#### AMOUNT OF WORK NEEDED

If your pony is on grass, he will exercise himself if you do not want to take him out. But if you take him out very little he will get shy and awkward and give you a poor ride. Try and take him out at least two or three times a week, and the more work he does in moderation the better will he go.

If he is stabled he must be exercised daily for about twelve miles or he will get too fresh.

#### THE FARMER'S FIELDS

Always treat the farmer and his fields with courtesy. Be very careful to avoid growing crops. Most beginners can recognize and avoid roots, sprouting corn, and beans with their three-lobed leaves, but a crop which is easily damaged by a horse's hoofs and not so easily recognized is 'seeds', that is to say a stubble-field with a crop of clover just sprouting among the stubble. Be careful, too, not to ride on new-sown grass which is very tender. Never diverge from the public path unless you have permission.

Be very careful about shutting all gates. If you ever have to chase after your pony for half a day or longer because someone left the gate open, you will realize what the farmer feels about this.

Learn to open gates neatly. If the latch is on your left, you must bring your pony's off (right) side against it and open it with your right hand. Do not get your knees crushed, or let a gate swing on to your pony's hindquarters. Gate-opening requires hands and experience.



Some town dwellers seem to be under the impression that the country is a sort of desert which has no owner and where they themselves are the first and last visitors. They behave as if unaware of the fact that every field is owned by someone, and every hedge has been grown at great trouble and expense, and that every turnip and every blade of corn represents labour and expenditure.

The other day I met a farmer who has a right of way going across his fields. He was full of complaints of five young people who had just ridden across his fields, not sticking to the right of way, but riding all over the place. A little later I met a man riding, who told me he had just caught a loose horse and returned it to its owner, one of this group of five. They had been jumping made-up fences put up on private land. It is this sort of thing which makes the countryman think that the townsman is deficient in manners.

#### THE WILD WEST

Wild West and rodeo-riding are quite out of place in this country. The best riders are always quiet and gentle, and manage their horses by imperceptible means. A small and kind little girl was once cantering by my side; her pony was rather lobbing along, and I was just going to tell her to shorten her reins a little and apply her legs and so pull him together, when she surprised me by loosening her reins, and giving the pony a terrific belting behind the girths with her whip. This was the result of 'Westerns' at the cinema, from which one gains the impression that the ideal out there is to be able to get on to any horse, broken or unbroken, encourage him to do his worst, and ride him whatever he may do. There are doubtless splendid and courageous riders among the cowboys, but our ideal is quite different. Our best breakers avoid by their knowledge and tact any outbreak on the part of their horses; the better horsemen they are, the better do their young horses behave. Our glory is to be able to train a young horse without provoking any outburst. The horse having been thus trained by gentle methods and never having learnt any tricks, is far more likely to remain quiet when he gets into less capable hands than the breaker's.

Notice that man on a young horse going down the village street; the horse is shying all over the place, he whips round at a motor-car, flings out his heels at a dog, sets to bucking, and ends up with a terrific rear, before he finally disappears into his stable gates; the groom sticks to him like a limpet. 'Wonderful rider', says someone. Not at all. The next day the same horse comes forth; he has a different rider this time – a little battered old Irishman full of sympathy and knowledge. It is obvious the horse is very fresh and on the look-out for a game, and he may succeed in having one in the course of the ride, but so far as they remain in sight the two proceed quietly together. No one comments on this man's riding, but knowledgeable people realize that he will train their horse in the way he should go, and the other will ruin him.

## JUMPING

Now is the time, if you feel fairly secure, to get a little jumping practice. Try to find a quiet road with a grass track at the side and ditches cut at intervals. Trot steadily along, and when you see a ditch, say, fifteen yards ahead, hold your pony more firmly between your hands and legs, keep as still as a mouse so as not to put him off, and as he takes off, drop your hands on his withers and lean forward. You will land without a jar. Any movement of your hands at the last moment will make him drop his hindlegs in the ditch. Any difficulty you may encounter, such as the feeling of being 'left behind', or of coming down with a bump, or of giving your pony a tug at the mouth, is the result of not leaning your body quite far forward enough. You will find no difficulty in learning to jump if you remember this one thing, and think of nothing else.

When the ditch-jumping comes easily, try and get a little jump of faggots built up about two feet high. Lay two faggots end-on in a field and two others for wings. It does not matter how low this jump is, if only it is high enough for the pony to jump and not to walk over. Come up at a slow canter, lean forward, and you are over. Do not immediately turn round to have another go, or your pony may take a dislike to jumping and refuse, but reward him with a mouthful of grass or a handful of oats, and try again. Ponies very often refuse from wrong treatment; it cannot be very pleasant to have a beginner coming down heavily on one's back time after time, and he needs things made as pleasant as possible. If you are nice about it you will find him very long-suffering. If your pony does not care about it, make the jump very low so that he can step over if he likes; arrange for him to be jumping towards home; place his stable companion on the far side as a bait; or get him to jump alongside him. Don't forget the oats, and and you will have no trouble. When you can jump one bundle of faggots easily, pile another on top.

Native ponies are natural jumpers. A New Forest pony I had jumped a five-barred gate – a big one out of a farmyard – when he was six months old. He also as a two-year-old frequently jumped – to reach a friendly carthorse – a brook which always stopped nine out of ten riders in the hunting season. The Exmoors are splendid, and I have seen a 12·2-hand pony show the way over a blind ditch to three 16-hand hunters who had given it as their opinion that the place was dangerous.

Hunting with the Exmoor foxhounds on one of these ponies, I was suddenly confronted by what appeared to me a terribly high bank. I had never jumped such a thing in my life, but I found myself on the other side cantering comfortably away with only the vaguest notion of how the pony had surmounted it. It had certainly been done with supreme ease.

## OLD SPORTING PRINTS: THE 'THEORY OF LIFTING'

If you look at old sporting prints showing the riders taking their fences, you will notice that they are generally depicted with their reins in their left hand and their right hand raised high above their heads. This was their 'theory of lifting' the horse, which is thus described in an old book dated 1863: 'The right hand, holding the whip, should be perfectly free and ready to help the horse with a cut across his haunches – called "waking him up behind", and with this view, on taking a desperate leap, the right hand is raised high above the head as if to threaten the horse with a terrific cut unless he does his best. Novices in their ignorance mistake the theory of lifting and fancy they should lift the hand which holds the bridle,' etc.

Nobody would try to 'lift' their horses nowadays, either with their whip or with their reins. We cannot do better than sit as still as we can, keep our hands down, lean forward and let our pony do the rest.

## THE JUMPING COURSE

One riding master has arranged for his pupils a miniature jumping course of various fences all under two and a half feet. A pony is not likely to object to jumping these little fences, and from the point of view of the rider, a little jump is just as good practice as a big one. The course is laid over half a dozen fields belonging to a friendly farmer, and sometimes a paper-chase is arranged and the jumps are arranged according to the capabilities of the riders. It is easier to jump in time with your pony if he is going straight ahead; a pony dislikes stopping and turning back over the same jump, and both he and the rider will have more fun and gain confidence if they go straight ahead. Out hunting, both pony and rider will find that they can jump much bigger places than they do at home.

Never let your pony refuse if you can help it; have the fence so low that he will not think of refusing. When he is proficient you can then gradually get it higher. If he continually refuses, it becomes a habit which is hard to cure.

When I was a child almost the first thing I was expected to jump was a hurdle. The pony and rider both being ignorant, the result was refusal after refusal, until the pony was said to be 'unable to jump'. Trainers nowadays begin with a jump so small that it is not worth the horse's while to refuse, and by a succession of tiny steps eventually reach the marvellous performances which we see in the show-ring. The principle is the same for all things in the horse's training. Begin at the very beginning, and there will be no trouble.



Before long you will be singing with Adam Lindsay Gordon of:

*– the leap, the rise from the springy turf,  
The rush through the buoyant air,  
And the light shock landing – the veriest serf  
Is an Emperor then and there.*

## CHAPTER EIGHT

# The Pony's Faults and How to Cure Them

*A Pony Easily Contracts Bad Habits – Understanding Your Pony – Ride Your Pony up to His Bridle – The Rider or the Pony Will Rule – Fights are to Be Avoided – Shying – Running Out – Lying Down – Kicking – Kicking when out at Grass – Rearing – Pulling Ponies – Biting a Puller – Refusing – Fibbing – Difficult to Lead*

THIS chapter might just as well be called 'The Rider's Faults and how to cure them'. 'Blame yourself and not the horse' is a fine motto for the horseman, and generally a just one. Looking back on my own riding career, I see that most of my difficulties with horses were due to my own faults, faults which a greater knowledge would have avoided. As I gained more experience I found out little by little the best way of dealing with the difficult problems which all horsemen meet with, and difficulties which at one time seemed insurmountable often melted away.

One of the most remarkable characteristics of the horse is his anxiety to do what we ask him; and if a pony is well broken and well ridden he will be without tricks of any kind.

### A PONY EASILY CONTRACTS BAD HABITS

Unfortunately, if he is wrongly treated, the pony very quickly forms bad habits, and as he is a creature of habit, once he has formed them they are difficult to eradicate. Therefore, be on your guard. If your pony shies at a motor, be warned, and take precautions! Do not if you can help it allow him to do it a second time. If he does it three times, you may look upon it as a habit which will need special care to cure. It is so with all tricks. We want to use our brains and think why our pony shies, or kicks, or pulls, and lay our plans to avoid a repetition of this trick, which once it is a 'habit' destroys his value and is reckoned rather ungenerously as a 'vice'.

Looking back, I can remember several horses I owned which were allowed to develop bad habits. I remember complaining to a dealer that one horse was a terrible hand at bucking; all he said was, 'Why do you allow him to do it?' I thought about this a good deal and made up my mind to cure him, and I did. Before that, I took the view that if a horse bucked, all his rider had to do was to stick on, and if he could do that, that was all that could be required of him.

Remember that it is your job to keep your pony well mannered, and to cure him if he has any bad trick. He can be cured if only you use the right method. That excellent groom, John, of whom we read in *Black Beauty*, used to say a regular course of his special physic balls would cure almost any vicious horse. These balls 'were made up of patience and gentleness, firmness and petting: one pound of each to be mixed with half a pint of commonsense, and given to the horse every day'.

One of the commonest causes of a pony contracting bad habits is lack of exercise. If a pony is left in his field for a week and then taken for a ride, he is sure to feel strange and excited and is not likely to give you a comfortable ride. Regular work is the cure for many troubles.

It is worse still if a pony is stable-kept, over-fed and under-exercised. He comes out 'too fresh', is longing for a game, and a beginner has not sufficient knowledge to control him. A friend who was a great show-judge and lover of children's ponies told me this story. He was asked by a very wealthy man to find a good-looking quiet pony for his small son aged ten who was learning to ride. My friend was some time before he could find the right animal. One day as he was riding down a quiet country lane he saw in front of him a small girl on a grey pony. She was on her way home returning from her ride. She turned the pony off the road and jumped him very neatly over a hurdle into a grass paddock, which was apparently his home, and she then proceeded to take off the saddle and pull the bridle over his head. He stopped to admire the pony, and asked if he was for sale, but was told 'No!' However he made up his mind that the pony was perfection for the small boy and he eventually managed to buy him. He warned the new owner that the pony was grass-kept and was on no account to be either stabled or over-fed.

A month later he was asked to go down and stay for a morning's cub-hunting. He enquired after the pony and was told that he seemed a bit of a handful. The boy found him difficult. Next morning early, as he stood at the hall door waiting for his own mount, the pony was brought round. He was horrified to see that he was clipped out and over-fresh – obviously just out of the stable. The boy had some difficulty in mounting, and no sooner was he on than the pony stood straight up on his hindlegs. The small boy was terrified and was only too glad to get off. The owner said that he couldn't keep the pony 'out' as he looked too rough; and that he behaved so badly that the boy was getting nervous of him, and they did not consider him a suitable mount for a beginner. My friend was naturally very much annoyed and even more so when a week later he heard that the pony had been shot – he was considered vicious.

Some people constantly have trouble with their mounts. They buy a quiet pony and in six months he is full of tricks. You will notice that a pony frequently reflects his owner's special weakness. For instance, some children always seem to



have pulling ponies, others always have refusers, and so on. Your own particular pony soon finds out your weak spots and takes advantage of them.

As you improve in your riding you will find that not only can you prevent your pony acquiring tricks but you can cure him of any he has.

#### UNDERSTANDING YOUR PONY

Ponies need study if we are to understand them and manage them properly. The grass-kept pony looked after entirely by oneself teaches one a great deal more than the stabled pony looked after by a groom. A common mistake lies in thinking that ponies are just like human beings – they are not. The animal world suffers very much from this idea, which is fostered by the immense number of children's books which depict animals dressed up as human beings – they are most misleading and harmful.

Another mistake lies in thinking that a pony is nothing more than a bit of machinery which will answer to acceleration and brakes like a car. This idea will prevent anyone from becoming a good horseman.

Another error lies in thinking that if only you love your pony enough he will love you and therefore will do no wrong. This idea is unsound, but it is quite common. Children know that parents who love their children very much may bring them up unwisely; their love does not necessarily mean that the child will respond to it by obedience. It is just the same with the pony. You must be wise and you must be firm. You must lead your pupil in the way he should go. The horse is so biddable and anxious to please that he will never do wrong if he has a good enough breaker and a good enough rider. Many horses never have either. Horses who have had the advantage of both are generous and devoted friends of man.

The best horsemen believe that the horse is a great gentleman and should be treated like one. This is perfectly true as regards the thoroughbred horse. It does not seem quite to apply to the pony, for many ponies seem to partake more of the nature of rather mischievous but very attractive boys.

Riders frequently credit their horses with wrong motives. For instance, if a horse bucks, he is often supposed to be doing it with the object of getting rid of his rider. He probably is doing it for fun, or because something is uncomfortable. If he takes a gallop against the rider's wishes, all he is thinking is, 'What a perfect bit of turf, and dinner time too; I really must stretch my legs and we'll be home in no time.' Many riders think that he is doing his best to run away with them, but he is not really thinking about 'them' at that moment, only about himself. A nervous rider makes a nervous pony, probably because such a rider's signals are not decided and clear and this makes the pony feel anxious and uncertain himself.

## RIDE YOUR PONY UP TO HIS BRIDLE

The commonest cause of the pony developing tricks is the inability of beginners to ride their ponies up to their bridles. They must by the use of a light hand and plenty of leg try and pull them together – condense them; a horse who is thus collected and balanced is easily controlled, he is in the perfect position for obeying his rider's wishes. Once you can do this, your difficulties will disappear.

The pony who is not ridden up to his bridle is out of touch with his rider; he therefore follows his own wishes. The slack reins and slack legs give him no guide as to what his rider wants; therefore he proceeds much as he would if he was out on his own. He meets a motor, turns round and bolts for home; he sees a dog and kicks out at it; he shies violently across the road when he sees a danger in the hedge, or, if he is very fresh, he likes to pretend there is a danger – a lion or a bear – and he shies violently away from it.

There is nothing 'vicious' in all this. Having been left to his own devices he has simply followed his own nature. But if he goes out often with a slack rider of this sort, these tricks which started harmlessly enough become confirmed, and stern measures must be adopted to cure him. Even if cured by a firm rider he will easily revert to bad ways again – he will never be the reliable pony he was.

## THE RIDER OR THE PONY WILL RULE

To spoil an animal is cruel. An obedient, willing pony is given so much of his own way that he becomes unridable and is sold to go in a milk-cart. A dog is allowed to chase chickens or sheep, he becomes an anxiety and expense, and has to be destroyed. The pony or dog has only one life in this world, and his owner has ruined it.

In the partnership between the pony and his rider, the rider must be the senior partner, and the ride must be conducted according to the senior partner's ideas. How are we to persuade our pony to do what we want? If we have a difference of opinion what are we to do?

Here are some important principles to think about.

### *Co-operation*

It is most important in training horses or any animals to keep your pupils on your side – to persuade them to co-operate with you. For if they are in opposition to you your difficulties will be increased a hundredfold. If you give enough encouragement, accompanied at times by rewards, your pupil will be co-operative, working with you. If training is conducted on these lines a horse enjoys being broken in. Horses have been domesticated so long that they want to understand their work, and until they do they feel that something is lacking.

*Patience*

Patience is essential in all those who train animals. If your pony is young or inexperienced he may not understand, or he may be nervous. Give him the benefit of the doubt, if there can be any possibility of a doubt.

*Use your brains*

Be resourceful. Why is it that he refuses to do what you want? How can you persuade him to do it?

*Never give in*

Most important of all – never give in if you can possibly help it. If you are going to be a good horseman you must have a strong will, otherwise your pony will rule you, for he has a pretty strong will of his own. If, for example, you are riding a young pony and he refuses to go down a certain lane, you will eventually get your way by coaxing him or leading him, or waiting until someone comes along and gives him a lead or drives him on.

*Always begin at the beginning*

Do not ask him, for example, to jump a big fence, until he is quite obedient at a tiny one.

**FIGHTS ARE TO BE AVOIDED**

Some people still believe that in horse-training a fight is absolutely necessary at some stage of the breaking. Fortunately the number of these people is decreasing. The best breakers train their horses without any fight at all. It is disastrous to get up a fight with your pony – to force him into battle – unless you are absolutely certain that you will win. Sometimes a couple of sound whacks will startle him into obedience, but if that does not answer, more chastisement is a great mistake. The horse is of a temperament not uncommon among us, and he will die rather than give in once he gets his back up. A good thrashing never does him anything but harm. Horses, like dogs and human beings, sometimes deserve a good thrashing. But if it is going to do them no good, but quite the reverse, it is foolishness to pursue that method. And if you try coercion and fail, the pony will never forget his victory.

Sometimes the trainer has to think quickly, so that he can foresee the probable course of events. For instance he must on no account have a difference with his horse on a slippery road or a road with much traffic, for in such places the horse is bound to win. Far better to slur over the difficulty with as little fuss as possible, and choose your own ground to settle your difference of opinion.

I remember a nice four-year-old belonging to a young farmer. He was young and rather 'green', but he had been well broken, and he only needed steady



riding to make a good horse in a year or two. I rode him several times on the hills when I was staying at the farm. A year later I enquired for him and was told that he had turned out badly. A girl who stayed at the farm had ridden him and he stopped with her at the cross-roads. This is a very common occurrence with a young horse, and the best way to deal with it is to get off and coax him forward with as little fuss as possible. The girl was inexperienced, and she kept trying to push him on with her legs. He stood firm. She then thought she would use her whip, so she gave him a couple of whacks. He started to rear slightly. She gave him two more and he got up higher. She felt a bit nervous and he then knew that he was master. Whenever she tried to urge him forward he stood up again and she took him home, which was just what he wanted. The next time she went out he did the same thing. He had realized that if only he got up high enough the rider would give in. He then did the same thing with his owner. The road was slippery and it was no place for a fight. The pony had found out how to get his own way and he never forgot it. He was sold cheap.

Another nice four-year-old was bought by a young man as a hunter. He was a good horseman on 'made' horses but had not the patience for young ones. Hounds found, and the 'field' spread out to jump quite a small fly-fence. The four-year-old, from nervousness, inexperience or over-excitement, refused. The rider who had won more than one point-to-point was disgusted at his discomfiture in full view of a hundred people. He put her at it repeatedly. Each time she refused with more determination. At last someone suggested that what she needed was a good hiding. The young man hit her twice, and she reared up with him. Each time he put her at the fence she reared up higher and was in danger of coming over. Eventually he had to take her home. She had won. She was sold the following week.

He would have been wiser to avoid a battle with her. He could have taken her away from the excitement of the hunting-field and taught her quietly how to jump over very small and easy places. But it needs great moral courage to accept defeat from a horse when onlookers are urging one to take harsh measures.

Both these horses were practically ruined in a few minutes by lack of knowledge and lack of patience. Young horses should never discover that in certain circumstances they can defeat their rider quite easily. Cure in such cases is very difficult.

It is all-important that the pony should learn good habits from the very beginning and not bad ones. Rearing is one of the worst habits he can contract, and every care should be taken that he never learns it. A tactful horseman will foresee the danger and avoid it, a tactless horseman will drive him to desperation and allow him to find out how strong he is.

Similarly, when we teach him to jump, it is extremely easy for him to refuse; and one often sees a rider putting his pony at a fence time after time, apparently



thinking that eventually he will jump it. But all he is teaching him is how easy it is for him to refuse, and that is another bit of knowledge which he should never be allowed to acquire.

#### SHYING

This is a common and unpleasant trick. Sometimes the horse does it for fun because he is too fresh, and sometimes because he is really nervous. You must try to find out what the real cause is. In either case it will grow on him unless it is checked, and the borderland between pretended and real fear is very narrow. He will simulate fear, just as a child who gets over-excited with a game in the dark pretends to be frightened, and screams himself into a real fit.

In the first place try and ride him more up to his bridle, make him really put his best work into his walk, trot or canter, instead of lobbing along anyhow, until it suddenly occurs to him that he has quite a lot of superfluous energy which he will expend in a shy. Supposing you suspect that he is going to shy at, say, a heap of stones in the hedge on your left side, you will find that if you keep him a little away from it and refuse to allow him to look at the object of danger he will pass it more quietly. Therefore pull your right rein to make him avert his eyes, and if at the same time you press him with both your legs, this will keep him straight and you will pass without difficulty. He is probably not really afraid of this sort of thing, but the fact of coming unexpectedly on it when he was not expecting it makes him shy away from the sudden danger. Never in any circumstances hit him for shying, or force him up to what he fears. You want him to ignore the danger and slip past it, taking as little notice of it as possible. If he is really terrified, and you cannot get him past, you must behave as the breaker does with his young horses when they first go out on the roads and are scared of everything they meet. Slip off his back, rub his forehead and talk to him; let him stare at the danger as long as he likes, and when his fears seem to be subsiding coax him with a handful of oats to go nearer. Repeat this until at last you are quite close to the danger, when he will put down his head and smell it.

If you start gradually you can get your pony used to the most startling things – traction engines, threshing machines, guns going off quite close, bands playing, etc. If on the other hand he is tested too highly at first, say by a traction engine which scares him to death before he has been gradually broken to it, his nerves will get such a shock that the cure will be far harder. Use all your brains to avoid letting him ever get a bad fright. Oats are all-powerful, and if he can eat he is not badly scared.

‘Turning round’ is a development of shying and is encouraged by weak riders who do not use their legs and hands properly. The pony stops dead, appears petrified with fright, swings round and bolts for home as hard as he can. Now it is your business always to tell your mount what he is to do, more especially when

you want him to do something not in accordance with his wishes. If you sit slackly on his back without telling him by leg and hand what you want, he naturally follows his own instincts, which are to bolt for home when he meets anything that scares him. When you see anything of this nature ahead, squeeze him gently or strongly – according to his nature – with your legs and let him feel the reins and know that you are determined to go ahead.

A young man learning to ride was boasting of the extraordinary quietness of his mare who, he said would pass anything. To prove this he rode her towards a noisy motor 'bus without giving her any indication of his determination to pass it. She naturally followed her own instincts, whipped round and fled for home.

Horses shy much less in company, and out hunting they are so interested that they rarely shy at all.

#### RUNNING OUT

Running out, or disobeying hand and leg, is a common fault. Supposing that you are riding round a field. When the pony passes the gate for home he sometimes works off sideways towards it like a crab in spite of rein and leg. It is clear that he is not sufficiently obedient to hand and leg, and you must give him more practice in obeying the aids.

If you take him for rides 'in company' he will probably give up this tiresome trick. He does the same thing when he 'runs out' at a jump. It is a mistake to ride much in the same field or up and down the same road; the pony gets bored and is very likely to try and get the better of you by this trick. When you are experienced you will be able to cure this, but it is not so easy for beginners once the bad habit has been acquired.

#### LYING DOWN

Ponies sometimes do this, especially in spring and autumn, when they are changing their coats. They are itchy and know that a good roll will dry their sweat and make them more comfortable. They choose generally a nice dry sandy field and may go down very quickly. If they do succeed in going down, there is generally plenty of time to slip off when they are on the ground. I have never known any harm come of this unpleasant performance, but of course it must be cured at once. If you know from former experience that your pony is likely to roll at a certain spot, lay a trap for him. Get off, bring the reins over his head and hold them as long as possible, and saunter along very slowly without looking at him, to give him every chance of rolling. When he is going down, give him a tremendous smack on the nose with your hand, and shout at him at the same time, and you will cure him for good and all.

You can, however, nearly always stop him from rolling if you are on the look-out. If he begins to paw the ground or the water, he is going to roll, and must be

driven forward at once; shout at him, raise his head sharply by pulling the snaffle from one side to the other through his mouth, and then hit him hard. He may very likely do this as he crosses a shallow stream: drive him on at once.

A small friend of mine stood still at the edge of a wide pool which stretched across the road after a heavy shower. The pony began to paw at it, and she sat perfectly still. I shouted at her to hit him hard, which she did, and all was well. She had an idea in her head that ponies pawed water in order to test the depth!

#### KICKING

The horse's natural defence against his enemies is to attack them either by kicking with his hindlegs or by striking with his forelegs. This last is seldom seen with broken-in horses, but one should always be on one's guard against kicking. Keep out of the way of horses' heels unless you know you can trust them. They must, too, know that you are there; a nervous horse unexpectedly touched behind sometimes lets out without thinking. He remembers his ancestors, and their ancient enemies, lions and tigers. Some horses dislike dogs and kick at them from nervousness. Of course this must be stopped, and a sharp jerk at the reins and a shout will do it. He will soon get used to dogs if you have one yourself.

A few horses contract an ugly trick called 'cow-kicking'. As the rider mounts, the horse kicks forward at him with his hindleg. I do not think that he could touch his rider if he were mounting from the correct position, somewhere near his shoulder. He probably learnt this trick from being irritated by a clumsy rider digging his toe into him when mounting. He could be cured by having someone to hold his head high whenever he was being mounted. A horse whose head is high cannot kick. Some ponies are inclined to buck when ridden. One common cause is an uncomfortable saddle; any discomfort at the back of the saddle will irritate him. Another common cause of bucking is a saddle that slips forward on to the withers. When the weight is all in front like this it would be surprising if the pony did not buck. Some riders encourage a pony to buck by riding with a slack rein; the pony's head gets lower and lower and he is encouraged to throw his heels up. You can prevent this by keeping him better collected and balanced. If he shows signs of bucking pull his head up and shout at him.

Sore backs ought to be unknown with a cross-saddle as it is easy to fit. The horse occasionally suffers from a painful small swelling on the vertebrae at the back of the saddle. There is no open sore, and for that reason it sometimes escapes notice. It is deep-seated and very painful when weight comes on it, and naturally causes the horse to buck.

#### KICKING WHEN OUT AT GRASS

The natural defence of a pony when he is alarmed is to kick. If, therefore, when we want to catch him, we corner him, and approach him from behind, it would





THE HEAD OF A THOROUGHBRED



THE HEAD OF A CROSS-BRED PONY

*Left: The Thoroughbred is the best horse in the world. He is, however, not suited either for heavy work or rough work, or for small children's riding. Right: The dam of this pony was an Exmoor and the sire a Thoroughbred. This is a beautiful head; this pony was kind, clever and courageous. Another good cross is the Arab and native pony.*

#### THE HEAD OF AN ARAB

*The Arab is a beautiful little horse, and has a suitable temperament for children's riding. There is a close likeness between his head and that of many of our native ponies. (The photograph is of champion Naseem, bred by Lady Wentworth.)*



#### A CROSS-BRED PONY

*The great majority of the ponies one sees about are cross-bred. This is to say that their forbears belong to two or more different breeds. If care is taken in selecting sire and dam the produce should be good.*

be surprising if he did not kick, and it is not fair to blame him for viciousness. The right way is to coax him with a pocket of oats to come towards you. Some nervous horses, who do not know whether they can trust human beings or not, edge their hindquarters towards us when we approach; oats will soon make them change their ways.

It would be unwise to put two or more shod ponies of whom you know nothing, into a field together. The danger of a kick from a shod hoof is great, and it would be wise at first to remove all hind-shoes. If, after a few days, the ponies seem good friends, and have shown no sign of kicking, their shoes can be replaced without much risk.

#### REARING

A horse who stands straight up on his hind-legs is said to 'rear'; it is usually caused by too much corn, a severe bit, or too much pressure on the reins. If he rears, try and throw your weight forward and keep the reins quite slack. Very few horses rear in a snaffle. Any pony that rears badly is unfit for a child.

#### PULLING PONIES

Many good ponies are hard pullers. They get over-excited when they see the chance of a gallop, and directly they get on a bit of turf they want to be off. Many ponies pull in company who will go quietly enough alone. Never allow a pony to race with others, as the excitement goes to his head. Always try and ride quietly and give your pony plenty of work.

Try and find a place where you can give him a steady gallop so that he can stretch his legs and get the exercise he needs. A pony hates being pulled up after a few hundred yards and started off again.

Do not think that by going a great pace 'galloping his head off' you will quiet him. On the contrary, the moment he has got his wind he will be off again harder than ever.

Some ponies pull because they have been badly broken and their mouths have been roughly used so that they are 'hard-mouthed'. It is just a bad habit, and often they do not understand that when you pull the reins you want them to go slower.

A pony who pulls a little can generally be cured if the rider will give him from time to time a course of the exercises in Chapter V. These exercises will balance him, and if you can balance him he will stop pulling.

Whether your pony is going to pull or not depends largely on the way he starts off at any particular gallop. If you can steady him and pull him together gently at the start of the gallop (balance him) he will go off 'from his hocks' and not pull an ounce. But if you allow him to go off anyhow, he will go off 'on his shoulders' with his head too low and pull the whole time.



If he is a really bad puller and you see no prospect of curing him, you will be wise to sell him, for a pulling pony will give a beginner a bad seat and heavy hands.

The more thoroughbred blood a pony has the more likely is he to be a puller. Thoroughbreds are excitable and galloping goes to their heads. Some of them go hacking quietly, but the excitement of the hunting-field is usually too much for them. When hounds run they need experts to ride them, because the only way to hold them is to balance them, and that is not easy. Until a child understands how to balance a pony it is wise to avoid thoroughbred blood.

#### BITTING A PULLER

There is an old saying that 'there is a key to every horse's mouth' and this is true – or very nearly so – but you must be a good horseman before you can either find or use it.

Do not make the mistake of thinking that you will find the key in some remarkable contraption which you see at your saddler's. You will find that if you ride a large number of ponies three bits only will be all you require—a snaffle with a martingale, a Pelham, and for bigger ponies with larger mouths perhaps a light double bridle.

The making of a bit is a highly skilled job. It should therefore be bought from the best saddler only, or second-hand from a first-class stable.

It should fit your pony. One often sees people riding with a bit which could never fit the pony. A common fault is that it is too large and therefore gives an uneven bearing. And lastly, however suitable your bit may be it is quite useless unless it is carefully adjusted to fit properly. One hole up or down in the cheek-piece or a tighter or looser curb-chain may make all the difference.

The right bit is the one which prompts your pony to carry his head in the right position – much as he would in nature, head fairly high, nose fairly well out. A bit which makes him lower his head or bring his nose into his chest is wrong.

It is a mistake to think that you can stop a pulling pony by a severe bit. You cannot. That has often been tried; very severe bits have been used with the only result that the pony's mouth grew harder and harder, and he became more and more unmanageable. The leverage of a long-cheeked bit is so great that the lower jaw has been broken by severe biting and heavy hands, but even this barbarity did not effect a cure.

If you ever train a pony you will notice that his mouth is at first so sensitive that he will hardly face the gentlest of snaffles; he will not 'go up to it'. How is it then that later on so many ponies give one the impression that their mouths are quite insensitive? The explanation is that the pony's mouth hardens up in accordance with the severity of the bit. Then a still more severe bit is bought, and the

mouth eventually loses all its original sensitiveness. This is why a snaffle-mouthed pony should never be put in a double bridle. His mouth will never again be as sensitive as it was.

A puller may be stopped by a severe bit or by powerful arms, but he cannot be cured. Eventually his mouth will harden up and he will be worse than before. The only way to cure him is to make him understand that when you pull the reins you want him to go slower. Or, as old-fashioned people used to say 'When you pull at him he is not to pull at you'. To make him understand, give him a regular course of the 'backing exercise' until you can make him pull up smoothly from a trot and back a couple of steps without jarring himself or you.

Bits are today far less severe than they used to be, and there are consequently fewer bad pullers. A good rider will improve a pony's mouth so that he can eventually be ridden in a lighter bridle.

#### REFUSING

Some ponies refuse to jump because they are afraid of being hurt. You will notice that the boy on p. 57 is retaining his seat by hanging on to the pony's mouth. You can see by the way that the pony is setting his mouth that he is trying to avoid the pain; naturally he will take a dislike to jumping. Another source of pain is when a rider leans back instead of forward and comes down with a bump on his horse's loins – a very sensitive part of his anatomy. Or the forelegs may be badly jarred when jumping on hard ground, or the pony may have a weak back, sinews, or feet, or have a corn.

Another common cause of refusing is lack of training. A young ignorant pony refuses because he does not understand and is a little nervous.

But perhaps the majority of ponies refuse because they have been badly trained and have got into the habit of refusing. It is most important that a pony should never contract this habit. It is easy for him to refuse if he wants to.

If you want to make your pony a good jumper you should attend to the following points. Always use a snaffle bridle. Make the fence very low, about one foot high, so that he can step over it if he wants to. Arrange that another pony gives him a good lead. Put a good rider on him until he understands what to do. Arrange for him to jump going towards home, not away from it. Reward him for every jump with a bit of carrot or a mouthful of grass. When he is quite used to a low fence make it a little higher.

When I was training my ponies a friend allowed me to use the fences he had put up for training his two-year-olds for steeplechasing. They were not more than two feet high. All my ponies jumped them without a single refusal. When my pupils, all beginners, got on, I sent them over in couples, and there was not a

single refusal. In a short time these ponies, all four-year-olds, jumped willingly anything which was within their compass. None of them refused.

### JIBBING

Jibbing in harness used to be fairly common. It still occurs with riding horses but not often in a serious form. In harness the horse would stop dead, often going up a hill, and nothing would move him. The driver, usually convinced that the horse was obstinate, would shout and swear, and lash the unfortunate animal more and more furiously. It was all useless.

Years ago I was given this tip. It is extremely effective and with its aid I was able to move on many jibbers. Sit quite still on the box for a couple of minutes; on no account shout at or hit the horse. Then get down and stroke him gently just behind the ear, whispering to him and comforting him. You will notice that his neck feels as if it was made of steel; it is so tense and hard, he seems absolutely immovable; he might be a stone effigy. Then run your left hand down his foreleg and pick the foot up in the usual manner, and with this yielding of one member, the whole body relaxes, the muscles de-contract and lose their tenseness and the horse becomes normal again. Get up on to the box, ask your horse to move on, and he will do so.

My own feeling was that these horses were suffering from some sort of epileptic seizure.

### DIFFICULT TO LEAD

I once heard a small boy remark, 'I can't get this silly pony to follow me'. He was leading it across a field, and as he had the reins over the pony's head, and tugged at them hard, the pony hung back more and more. It is one of the peculiarities of a horse that he invariably hangs back if you pull at him. He does this if you pull at a halter or at the reins when teaching him to lead. The most you can do in this position is to 'vibrate' the reins gently; a stronger pull is hopeless. If he refuses to follow this way, you must give him a lesson in 'leading'.

Get him up against a wall or hedge on his off (right) side, holding your whip or long switch in your left hand well behind your back; walk on his left (near) side and touch him up behind. He will soon learn to walk or trot briskly by you. If the wall was not there, he would just swing his quarters away from the whip and avoid it.

It is most important that your pony should lead well; if he has confidence in you, you can coax him over an awkward place which it would be foolish to try and ride over; for instance, a low stone stile with stones to land on, a boggy place which might prove too boggy, and many sorts of trappy blind places which are safe enough for you one at a time, but not two together.



Then supposing you find yourself on a main road with some particularly large or noisy vehicle approaching. It is far wiser to get off and lead than to risk an accident. If you are on the left side of the road, where you should be, get off in plenty of time, get on the off side of your pony, that is between him and the vehicle, and shove him as far away from it as you can. He will gain confidence if you are in the post of danger, and if you can produce a handful of oats and reward him for his valour, and do not test him too highly to start with, he will learn to pass the worst object quietly. If he is scared and jumps he will jump away from you to the left and not on top of your toes. Choose a broad road for training a nervous pony to get used to motors; he must not be asked to face them on a narrow road until he has lost his fears.

## CHAPTER NINE

# The Horse's Character

*The Horse's Mentality is Different from Ours – He is a Highly Nervous Animal – His Courage – His Love of Sport and Home – Gregariousness and Herd Behaviour – Jealousy – Play – Memory – Affection – His Eyes and Ears – His Hearing – The Tail – The Neigh – Anxiety to Please – Finding the Way Home – Do Not Let Your Pony Get a Bad Name – Fidget's Bridle*

### THE HORSE'S MENTALITY IS DIFFERENT FROM OURS

ANIMALS have not the same sort of mentality as human beings. Their range of understanding and feeling is different to ours; in some things we show more intelligence, and in some things they do, and we must as often seem stupid to them as they do to us. One can imagine a wise old horse watching a young horse with an ignorant would-be breaker. He would perhaps let fall the following remarks:

'What a way to try and catch a horse!'

'Silly ass! Of course he will get kicked if he does that!'

'How can he think that the horse will follow if he tries to lead him that way?'

And so on.

If we consider ourselves the superior beings, we must try and understand the horse, and not expect him to do all the understanding. This selfish attitude is common enough, too, in our dealings with the dog. He is expected to enter into *our* life and amusements; how seldom we enter into his. The child, for instance, will dress him up in a bib and make him sit up at table; but if he catches a rabbit, it is quite possible that he will be told he is cruel!

We want more knowledge about our animals. We need to study them and learn about their way of thought and their likes and dislikes, which are most of them quite different to ours. We owe this to them if we consider that we are their superiors and have more brains. However good our intentions may be it is quite impossible to be kind to animals unless we understand them. If we understand our ponies we shall be able to treat them properly; if we do not understand them, no amount of kind feeling will make up. For example, a pony would far rather have his bridle put on correctly and his hay carefully chosen, than have too much patting and petting.

### HE IS A HIGHLY NERVOUS ANIMAL

Perhaps the thing from which the horse suffers more than anything else is the lack of comprehension that he is a highly nervous animal. It is his nature to flee before his enemies, and the greatest difficulty of the breaker is to get him used to

all sorts of strange sights and sounds. Though horses are trained to pass the appalling traffic of modern days they all hate it. Motorists who remember this try and moderate their speed and their noise, and above all are careful not to pass at close quarters. Nor does anything upset a horse more than angry shouts from a human voice. Excitable nervous people with high-pitched voices and hasty movements are unsuited to deal with horses; they like someone who is quiet, calm and deliberate.

Human beings often behave as if this characteristic of the horse was quite unknown to them. A lady whose small girl had been mounted on a strange pony of which she knew nothing, suddenly catching the little girl up from behind, brought her hand down with a hearty smack on the pony's hindquarters. The result according to pony nature might have been disastrous. A girl who was taken to see a stableful of horses dashed up to a thoroughbred mare of a particularly nervous and irritable disposition, and clumsily dragging back the clothing, exclaimed, 'This is the right thing to do when you are taken to see horses.' Some children who had a very quiet pony given to them were quite surprised when he showed nervousness when a child on a bicycle rode up and fell off with a crash at his feet – they would not have minded, why should he?

All these are little everyday things, perhaps hardly worth relating, but if an accident had resulted from these actions the human being alone would have been responsible though the horse would probably have been blamed.

#### HIS COURAGE

In spite of his nervousness, the horse is a courageous animal. There is nothing that a well-trained horse will not face if he is ridden by someone in whom he trusts. Many of us as we get older find that we care less about the fences out hunting. Not so the horse; he will face any fence joyfully in pursuit of the hounds. In racing or hunting he will gallop until he drops. Note too the pathetic courage of a worn-out underfed horse dragging a cart; he too will use his last ounce of strength in his master's service.

Adam Lindsay Gordon tells us:

*– the coward will dare on the gallant horse  
What he never would dare alone  
Because he exults in a borrowed force  
And a hardihood not his own.*

Job has a fine description of the horse in chapter xxxix. 19. He talks of the amazing courage of the horse:

'He paweth in the valley and rejoiceth in his strength: he goeth on to meet armed men.



He mocketh at fear and is not affrighted: neither turneth he back from the sword.'

He is an honest worker, always willing to give his best. If a horse shows slackness, the reason is either that he is underfed and has not the necessary physical energy, or that he is underbred and deficient in vitality. There is a true saying, 'The best whip is in the corn-bin.' A good horse is more than willing to do his work; neither whip nor spur is needed, and in this lies his great value to man.

#### HIS LOVE OF SPORT AND HOME

A striking characteristic of most horses is their love of hunting. The noise of galloping shoes is at all times most inspiring to them, but they also take an immense interest in the hounds. The sight and cry of hounds inspire them to deeds of valour beyond their usual capacity. This love of hunting is inborn with most horses, and the young horse on his first day with hounds is almost off his head with excitement. So much so that wise writers recommend that he should only be allowed to see hounds and then go quietly home again, or the excitement may be too much and he may never settle down to be a temperate hunter.

The love of hounds is even stronger than the love of home. I once took a New Forest pony out hunting for the first time – I confess he behaved very badly and it was all I could do to control him. In ordinary life he was on the lazy side, and this sort is always the worst when they really rouse up. He had two hours of bliss, and then I turned him, not without protestations, homewards. When near home, I got off and led him down a steep hill. As I mounted him he wheeled round, and before I could shorten the reins he was scampering off uphill again back to his beloved hounds – his home entirely forgotten.

Another rather solemn and always unexpected pony took his first day's hunting quite soberly. However, on our return, when near home, I got off to stretch my legs and give the hunting news to a road-mender. I laid the reins on the pony's neck while I adjusted my boot, when round whisked solemn-face and would have been back after the hounds some six miles behind us, if I had not just managed to grab him as he went off.

When we consider how large a part the love of home takes in the horse's life, these examples of the love of hunting being stronger still are the more remarkable.

Many horses go from home as gaily as they return, but others keep something 'up their sleeve' to signalize that the happy moment has come when our noses are turned homeward.

#### GREGARIOUSNESS AND HERD BEHAVIOUR

One notices many interesting things about horses at grass which one would miss if they were stabled. Their nature is to herd together; they are never content

alone, and are miserable if they are separated. Usually one among them is the leader and organizer. Within the herd are warm and enduring friendships and dislikes. If a newcomer is put among them, he invariably has a bad time; he is chivvied round the field by one or more of the herd, and even driven right into the hedge or ditch. Do not conclude that they are being cruel to him. If you put him alone in an adjoining field, he will never rest until he rejoins them, and after a bit he will be accepted as a member of the company.

At times the whole lot will go for a gallop, and a fine sight it is. Manes and tails flying, round and round they go, a regular circus. They dash up to their owner, pulling up in a semicircle just in time to avoid galloping over him, and after a second's pause, moved by a common impulse, off they go again, around and around full of the joy of life, until they have had enough of it and come up once more, each eager to put his soft muzzle into his master's hand.

### JEALOUSY

Nothing is quite perfect in this world, and at this moment they may show that they are no freer of the curse of jealousy than we are. It is not wise to produce lumps of sugar in such circumstances. Those who do not get a lump will very likely aim a kick, not at you, but at the pony who has received the sugar.

### PLAY

Ponies play an interesting game of rearing up on their hindlegs and boxing at each other. As they reach the earth again, the quicker of the two bends his head down and catches the other by the back sinews of a foreleg; this brings him down like a shot right to his knees, and he has to own himself defeated. I have seen a bulldog catch an Airedale in just the same manner and send him home crying with pain.

### MEMORY

The horse's memory is remarkable. In breaking in ponies and teaching children to ride, I could not help contrasting the two, to the horse's advantage. A pony is slow to learn, but once a lesson is acquired it is his for life. A child is quick; if he is attending he takes in at once what you tell him, but in five minutes you have to tell him again; the information you have imparted has been pushed out of his mind by a new train of ideas. If I met my ponies years after their breaking I had only to mount them and they remembered me and their training. I sometimes had to leave my half-broken Exmoor ponies to run absolutely wild on the moor for a year before I could return and continue their education. They not only knew me at once on my return and came up to be haltered, but they also remembered their former breaking as if I had left them only the day before.

Not so the children; in spite of repeated instruction, I should be disappointed but not surprised to see them repeating some fault they had been told of twenty times. Children, who have learnt a thing one year and then without a repetition are examined in it twelve months after, would make a very poor showing.

The horse's memory is indeed one of the most remarkable things about him. I believe it is true to say that he never forgets. For this reason it is all-important that his early impressions of human beings should be pleasant ones.

If he has been roughly treated in his early days, he can never be relied on in the same way as if he has been wisely handled. If owing to deficiencies in his breaking he has at any time learnt to buck or rear, you may be fairly certain that given the occasion and a weak rider, these vices will reappear.

The effect of good training may be, however, easily undone, for he is very easily ruined by a bad rider. Nor does he ever forget a bad fright, an accident, or some victory which he has won over a weak rider; here his memory is a misfortune.

A pony who has had his affection developed, and has always been treated with justice and kindness, can be relied on. He will, if properly treated, be a family friend and every bit as trustworthy as the family dog.

#### AFFECTION

The horse shows great affection for his owner; it is most noticeable among young horses. Naturally, horses who have passed through many hands are less impressionable. A nervous half-broken horse will eat out of his trainer's hand weeks before he will take an oat from anyone else. Young horses out at grass will allow their trainer to catch them, but no one else. I have seen a quiet young horse throw off a stranger – a good rider – simply because he did not know him. Some children's ponies will take oats from their owner and from no one else. Many will behave well with their own child-rider but resent others.

The horse's affection is worth cultivating. Some riders treat their horses as if they were motor-cars. But to most of us the fact that the horse is a creature of intelligence and affection is one of the most delightful things about him. If he were merely a mechanical animal he would lose all his charms. Cultivate his mind and his affection and you will not be disappointed. Further, there are many who owe their lives to a horse's affection, and I have witnessed more than one accident which would never have taken place if only the rider had taken the trouble to cultivate his horse's affection and to gain his confidence. I have myself, when riding sidesaddle, fallen so that my horse – a thoroughbred mare – was on top of me and her four hooves within a foot of my head. I had gradually to kick my way from beneath her, and if she had not chosen to lie perfectly still while I did so, I should not be here to tell the tale, but she lay as if dead until I was free and on my legs, when she sprang to her feet and stood beside me.



Those who ride much are sure to find themselves before long in some difficulty in which their safety or perhaps their horse's depends on mutual confidence. The worst accidents I have seen in the hunting-field have been caused by horses who got into a fix and lost their heads. On the other hand I remember a black mare, a distinguished timber-jumper, getting a hindleg hung up in a very awkward position when jumping a big bit of timber. She stood like a rock until a saw was fetched and she was released. If she had started struggling she would have broken her leg, but her mistress was there to comfort her, and she knew therefore that there was no cause for alarm.

Those whose horses are fond of them are saved an immense amount of trouble. If the horses get out of their field there is no need to chase them for half the morning with all the attendant risk of accidents. A call is enough and will bring them up to you to be haltered. A short time ago I was told that a gate had been left open and that my ponies had probably escaped from their field. The night was pitch-black, and I had no lantern. I went into their field and called. At once I heard the rustle of approaching feet, and a moment later a soft nose was pushed into each of my outstretched hands. I knew then that they were safe and that there was no cause for anxiety.

The horse, too, has enduring affection for his horse friends. I have had many proofs that after a year's absence this affection, both for human and animal friends, has remained undiminished, and I have no doubt that it would endure very much longer.

Here is a true story of a pony's memory. An Exmoor farmer bought for me one autumn a couple of six-months-old Exmoor ponies. A year later, when I stayed at the farm for a month, I saw them for the first time and began their education. They were very wild, and when first they saw me they always galloped off to the farthest corner of their big field. I coaxed them with hay and oats, and at the end of a month's visit they were so far advanced that they would let me halter them in the field and lead them about. My holiday was then over, and I had no chance of seeing them for a year.

On my return to the farm, I was told that one pony was all right, not far from the farm, but that the other had disappeared two months before and that the farmer had failed to find him among the wild ponies on Withypool Hill. He feared that the gipsies might have taken him; he was a particularly handsome little fellow. We rode out to search for my small treasure. Whenever a pony herd was viewed, we rode up as near as possible and searched through its ranks. It was none too easy, because a young pony changes a good deal in a year, and we were not too sure what we were to look for, and all the ponies were Exmoors and many of them mouse-grey like my Mousie.

We searched all day, getting more and more disheartened, and at last we decided to give up. Just as we turned home, we spied one more herd at the top of

a steep hill. I rode up to it, and when I got to within a couple of hundred yards of the herd I was able to make out half a dozen mares and their little foals, and with them a two-year-old colt who surely could be no other than Mousie. I got off very quietly and advanced step by step as far as I could without scaring them. I then produced a handful of oats and called. This was too much for the six little mares, who turned and fled, followed by their foals; but the little mouse-grey figure stood stock-still, in two minds what to do. He then turned round and advanced very slowly, one foot at a time, towards me. He came right up, put his little grey muzzle into my hand, gave two snuffs of recognition, and turned slowly away and walked after the mares. He did not touch the oats, he had probably forgotten the taste of them, but he remembered his human friend.

Those who know how very wild Exmoor ponies are and remember that this pony had only had one month's friendship with a human being, and that a year back, and had otherwise been running on his native hills as wild as a red deer, will realize what a remarkable testimony this is to memory and affection.

Later, when these ponies were further advanced in education, they both ran wild for ten months of each year, but on seeing me again came up from their native haunts at once to greet me and be haltered, and behaved as if we had parted only yesterday.

#### HIS EYES AND EARS

We can learn a great deal by observing a horse's eyes and ears. His eye is extraordinarily beautiful – large, soft, calm and expressive. It shows nervousness very clearly. If one is leading a young horse out on the roads in his early days, watch his eye and you can be warned in good time. The eyes show great intelligence. They seem to be watching and taking in everything. Even a horse at grass keeps his eye steadily on any human being who is about, and nothing escapes him.

His ears, too, are full of expression. If laid right back with white of eye showing, he is contemplating kicking; this is seldom seen with well-trained horses; but we may notice his ears gently moving to and fro listening to what we are saying. Always the two of them are moving; he seems to do his thinking with them; and if you watch his ears and his full soft eye you can make a good guess at his thoughts.

Watch that patient tradesman's horse at the door; his ears are working incessantly, saying perhaps something like this: 'I hope that motor doesn't come too close! How long master is! He always stops a long time here; my next stop is only three doors off! – that motor! doesn't he know I have blinkers on, and couldn't see him! I suppose he thinks I am made of machinery like himself and have no nerves!' The ears should usually be pricked forward and look firm and muscular. An unhappy overdone horse usually has his ears slightly back looking

as if he does not possess the energy to bring them forward. The whole expression is one of hopelessness as if life has been too much for him.

#### HIS HEARING

This is remarkably acute; he always hears the horn before his master, and many a time a hunter will stop and fling up his noble head, telling us that he can hear hounds. He is particularly sensitive to the human voice, and riders should make use of it, though they must be careful to avoid doing so in such a way as to annoy other people. A few reassuring words have great power in calming his fears, and an angry word will prevent him committing some sin he may be contemplating, such as kicking out at a horse behind him. Nothing upsets him more than the agitated voice of someone who has lost his head.

He also quickly learns the meaning of individual words, e.g. 'back! whoa!'

He has a great love of music and sense of rhythm, as everybody has noticed who has watched cavalry horses.

You will remember this fine description at the end of the *Jungle Book*:

'There was the troop horse with his tail like spun-silk, his head pulled into his breast, one ear forward and one back, setting the time for all his squadron, his legs going as smoothly as waltz-music.'

And then Kipling gives us the song of the 'Cavalry Horses'. You can hear them cantering as you read it:

*By the brand on my withers, the finest of tunes  
Is played by the Lancers, Hussars and Dragoons,  
And it's sweeter than 'Stables' or 'Water' to me,  
The Cavalry Canter of 'Bonnie Dundee'!*

*Then feed us and break us and handle and groom,  
And give us good riders and plenty of room,  
And launch us in column of squadrons and see  
The way of the war-horse to 'Bonnie Dundee'!*

Well-trained horses will obey a word spoken quietly, and the noise of shouting which proceeds from some third-class stables marks them for what they are. The noisiness and roughness with which some grooms treat their charges is a frequent cause of accidents in such stables. Horses should never be shouted at unless to stop them from a contemplated sin.

#### THE TAIL

Occasionally in the hunting field a sudden switch of the tail in front bids us beware. This generally betokens an irritable disposition, and we shall do well to keep clear.



The tail carried high and at an absurd angle, called by the cowboy 'high-tailing', is a manifestation of humour. You may, for instance, see it in a young horse who, having fallen with you at a fence out hunting, leaps to his feet and pursues the hounds, stepping high and carrying his tail up; he obviously is rather entertained at the idea of such a slow animal as a human being having to pursue his flying footsteps. Another really humorous incident may occur when you are just putting his bridle on. If he manages to give you the slip, he will 'high-tail' it round the neighbouring paddock in high glee. If, however, he is fond of you, he will soon come back when he has had his laugh out.

#### THE NEIGH

The voice of the horse thrills the horse-lover. One gets to know one's own horse's neigh, some bass and deep, others shrill and high. Horses always call to their friends if they get separated, and a lonely young horse will throw up his head and send out a thrilling anxious call to know if a friend is near. Sometimes the 'friends', if they are happy grazing, seem remarkably callous about answering.

The sweetest sound to the horseman is the almost soundless *knucker* of love with which a horse will greet a loved master. He makes this by blowing down his nostrils; they may be seen softly vibrating as he trots up to one in his field with a sort of suppressed neigh of love. The same sort of call greets the advent of his dinner, but it is shriller, louder and more commanding, as of one who says, 'Look sharp, please!'

#### ANXIETY TO PLEASE

It is a commonplace among breakers that the horse is so anxious to please that he will always do right if he understands. In this he shows superiority to both the dog and the man. One writer on the horse says, 'All horses are fit for heaven, but few men.'

It does not do to conclude from this that he is above 'pulling your leg'. He has various ways of 'trying it on' with those whom he has decided will be easy game. For instance, my first horse was an Irish cob, who carried me nicely for a few months. Then one day as we were laboriously climbing up the South Downs, the setting autumn sun flashed unexpectedly in his eyes. Charlie whisked round for home, and nothing would make him face that place again. 'Poor fellow,' I thought, 'he must have had a bad fright', and we went an easier route to sooth his feelings. A few days later we passed a place reputed to be haunted, and at this spot Charlie swung round again. 'Marvellous,' I thought, 'the knowledge horses have of these things', and we went home an easier way. A few days later on climbing the Downs at another spot, he took a dislike to a tuft of grass. Nothing would induce him to pass it. 'Terribly dangerous!' he said, 'quite

impossible!' This made me think. Here were three ways barred to us. At this rate we would be able to go nowhere. I came to the conclusion that it was all nonsense; I became stern and firm and he soon found he had to go where I asked him. Every rider has had examples of this sort of thing.

#### FINDING THE WAY HOME

The horse has an amazing gift for finding his way home. I once rode an Exmoor pony over the moor to the forge. He and I had never been in that part before. There was no path, but the distance was only two miles, and I knew the direction, so we had no difficulty. However, coming back, a thick mist had come on, and I realized I was completely lost – we had nothing to guide us but sheep tracks, of which there were many. The only thing to do was to trust the pony. He trotted along, steering what seemed to me a peculiar course. Suddenly he shied, and to my joy I recognized the identical big boulder, lying by the sheep track, at which he had shied on the way out. We had no further difficulty, but I should certainly have been lost without him. It is noteworthy that he did not make a beeline for home but followed exactly the rather roundabout route we had come by.

#### DO NOT LET YOUR PONY GET A BAD NAME

Unsympathetic or nervous human beings are prone to put the worst possible interpretation on the horse's actions. I stayed at a farm once where there was a nice-looking bay pony. His owners gave him a thoroughly bad character; they considered him vicious and dangerous, and the blacksmith refused to shoe him. 'I calls him Sour Face,' said the owner, peering at him over the partition of the stall – and he certainly had a queer wrinkled muzzle which made the name appropriate. I made friends with the pony by degrees, and found he was ignorant but not vicious. I taught him to pick up his feet and have his shoes looked at, rode him a time or two and found him quiet, and then took him to be shod. His former blacksmith refused to have anything to do with him, so I took him to a man with more knowledge and patience, and the pony was shod without difficulty. I am thankful to say his character was restored; he was sold well, and nobody ever called him 'Sour Face' again. This was a case of nervous people being suspicious and not having the knowledge to find out whether their suspicions were well- or ill-founded.

Another little pony was brought down to a farm to be broken in. She was a little beauty, and has since become a noted winner, but she was then terribly nervous. All her life she had run on the moor, and man and his strange rough

ways were abhorrent to her. Her breaking was hurried; there is never much time on a farm, and all too soon the day came when she was considered sufficiently quiet to be mounted. Every time the young man got on to her she lay down, and the farmer could make nothing of it. He decided that 'she needed a lesson'. At this stage I heard of the pony, and she was sent to me for a last chance. I put her in the stable and found her so nervous that she shook all over whenever I approached. However, at the end of a week, with the aid of many tit-bits and much petting, she changed her attitude and greeted my visits with pleasure. I was then able to proceed very slowly with the saddling and bridling, and when I mounted her there was no attempt to lie down, and I had no more difficulty, and in a fortnight I rode her back into her owner's yard. With a stronger pony an outbreak of bucking would probably have taken the place of the 'lying down'.

It is up to us to see that our horses do not get a bad name from lack of understanding. We need to study our animals more and look at things from their point of view.

Shakespeare, who understood horses as he understood everything else, describes in *Venus and Adonis* the horse of Adonis, and shows how thoroughly he could enter into the feelings of the horse when he escaped into the forest with the beautiful jennet. This is the description of the horse:

*Round-hoof'd, short-jointed, fetlocks shag and long,  
Broad breast, full eye, small head and nostril wide,  
High crest, short ears, straight legs and passing strong,  
Thin mane, thick tail, broad buttock, tender hide:  
Look what a horse should have, he did not lack;  
Save a proud rider on so proud a back.*

#### FIDGET'S BRIDLE

There is no particular moral in the following true story. Three little girls went riding daily in charge of a young groom. They each had their own much-loved pony, and the youngest of them, Susan, loved her pony, Fidget. One day, when they were out as usual, Susan announced that she was sure there was something wrong with Fidget, 'he felt funny'. The cavalcade was stopped; everybody looked at Fidget, they inspected his bridle and his saddle, but they could see nothing wrong and they continued their ride. Five minutes later they were stopped again. There was something wrong with Fidget, Susan was certain of it – and she was worried. She dismounted, she removed the saddle, and before her shocked sisters could stop her (she was only nine) she removed the bridle.

Fidget was a proper child's pony, and instead of galloping off home he contentedly cropped the downland turf. After careful inspection and observing that





EXMOOR FOALS NEARLY TWELVE MONTHS OLD

*These ponies are as alike as peas in a pod—a sure sign of a pure breed. Note their mealy noses.*



A CLASS FOR EXMOOR PONY STALLIONS

*These strong little riding ponies are today very scarce. Our pure-bred native ponies are full of 'quality' which comes from pure blood. It is essential in a riding pony.*



#### A WELSH MOUNTAIN PONY

*A lovely little Welsh mountain pony, with a typical pony head. Children under fourteen are lucky because they can select their mounts from our beautiful native ponies.*



#### A BEAUTIFUL DARTMOOR PONY OF THE OLD TYPE

*Note his little head, his short, pricked ears, and his clean fetlocks free from all 'hairiness about the heels'. These three points are typical of genuine pony blood. Pure-bred Dartmoor ponies are, unfortunately, very scarce.*

Fidget's appetite seemed as usual pretty good, Susan consented to put on the bridle and saddle and go on again.

The young groom, who always felt his responsibilities in charge of three young ladies, thought the whole proceeding was lacking in dignity; he was somewhat annoyed and complained to his mistress, saying that he hoped Miss Susan was not going to 'do it again'.



## CHAPTER TEN

# The Grass-kept Pony

### *Part I: The Field and the Grass*

*Stabled or Grass-kept? – The Grass-kept Pony – Choosing Your Field – Shelter – Water – Company – Flies – Management of Grass – The Pony in Spring – The Pony in Summer – The Pony in Autumn and Winter*

### *Part II: Hay, Oats and other Foods*

*Hay – Chaff – Oats – Other Foods – Notes on Feeding – Condition*

## PART I; THE FIELD AND THE GRASS

### STABLED OR GRASS-KEPT?

BEFORE you buy your pony you must make up your mind whether he is to be stabled or grass-kept. This is important because what suits one type of pony may not suit another. Generally speaking the thoroughbred or Arab type of pony is better for the shelter of a stable in the winter and it is only the moorland pony who is hardy enough to be kept out.

Another important point is that some ponies, when stabled, are far too excitable for a child's riding, though they may be perfect on grass; whereas others may be sluggish on grass, but perfect when stabled.

Unless your parents already have a stable it is a serious undertaking to open one. The following points must be considered:

It is expensive to keep a pony in a stable; his weekly bill will soon mount up. He will need regular exercise and should be out for a couple of hours daily every day except Sundays. If his owner cannot ride him he should be led out with another horse. If he does not get this two hours exercise he will soon become over-fresh and difficult to ride. He must be really well looked after, either by a first-class groom who knows his work, or by a man who may be trusted, although the latter will need careful superintendence. If his owner looks after him himself, that will mean hard work. A pony who is kept in must be really well cared for if he is to be happy. All this entails more expense and trouble than most people can afford.

### THE GRASS-KEPT PONY

Many children, therefore, now keep their ponies out at grass. The grass-kept pony, at all events in the country, is now the rule and no longer the exception.

The grass-kept pony is very suitable for children for the following reasons.

(1) He lives in a field, and it should be the child's job to catch him, saddle him, and bridle him. The two make friends, the child learns something of horse nature and of horse-mastership, both of which subjects remain a more or less closed book to children who depend on a groom for the care of their ponies.

(2) The pony does not get too fresh. If he feels lively he exercises himself; he is therefore never over-fresh. Stabled ponies often acquire tricks simply because they are a bit above themselves. Those who have not had experience of teaching children to ride are not always aware of the fact that far and away the greatest difficulty is to get a pony who is quiet enough. A keen pony inevitably makes a beginner nervous, and he then makes no progress. Children's ponies when stabled are almost invariably too fresh, unless they are hirelings and get out frequently. Even in the case of grass-fed ponies, the trouble often is to get them quiet enough for beginners. A slug is no good; a keen pony is no good; we want something in between, and ponies as a race are on the keen side. People who stable their ponies add to their difficulties. Many hunting people, realizing this, prefer to keep their children's ponies at grass, even though they have every facility for keeping them stabled.

(3) He will keep in first-class health if a few simple rules are followed. A stabled pony needs skilled care if he is to be healthy. Compare the shiny, gleaming eye of the grass-fed pony with the much less bright eye of the stabled pony, or the dull one of the neglected pony. Ponies thus left to nature are extraordinarily healthy, and it is rarely that they will need a vet.

(4) The cost varies according to the district; in some places it is very hard to get good grazing for your pony. But the cost of his keep will be one quarter, or even less, that of the cost of keeping a stabled pony.

Children of fourteen and over may prefer a stabled pony, because he has more go in him; but if economy is a necessity they can still get any amount of fun out of a pony on grass, who has a feed or two of corn added to his dietary.

It is a mistake to think that riding is a very expensive amusement. It is expensive if you want to hunt in the Shires and have the best of everything; but people who really love ponies, and are not too particular as to appearances, may get plenty of fun and a great deal of experience out of a grass-fed pony who has a feed or two a day, and to some of us the joy of looking after our horses ourselves is compensation for a good deal.

#### CHOOSING YOUR FIELD

If the owner will follow a few important rules for the outdoor pony, he should have no difficulty. But he must not think that a pony can be put into a field and left to take his chance. Very little has been written on this subject, and I can only tell you of what we found satisfactory. You will have to study your pony's condi-

tion carefully, and this is not too easy with a long-coated pony out at grass. Study also the question of grass and its feeding value. If you do not do these two things you will never have a pony in good condition. If you are lucky enough to have a small paddock, see that it is well fenced and has no bits of wire, glass, or tins lying about. Barbed wire is a terrible danger to animals, and the cause of many accidents. Those who can afford to do without it certainly should do so; but almost all farmers use it because it is cheap and easy to stretch a strand or two across any weak place. So long as it remains in place there is not so much danger in it, though it should of course be removed or clearly marked if there is any chance of hounds coming your way. It is most dangerous when it gets out of place and slips near the ground, and should be at once removed.

If you have no paddock, you may be able to persuade a friendly farmer to keep your pony for you.

A farmer usually is a very kind person, and you must go half-way to meet him; be very careful to fall in with his arrangements, and show him every possible consideration. It is sometimes possible if you live in a town, to arrange with a farmer living on the outskirts, where the rides are good, to keep your pony and your bridle and saddle, and go out to him when you want him. This of course takes time – but it is worth it. It is just as well to look round the field and pick up and put out of harm's way any dangerous things like glass or wire left lying about; farmers are often curiously careless in this way.

#### SHELTER

The pony appreciates a cool shed in summer, though it is not essential. The more solidly it is built the more he likes it. Children could often improve such sheds; shepherds at lambing-time manage to make wonderfully snug quarters for their ewes with extra straw, bracken or heather. The pony likes a shed in summer mainly to get away from the torment of flies. Flies do not care for a dark shed. Sometimes a sack hung over the upper part of the door will keep a shed darker and brush off the flies as the pony walks in. The shed should have two entrances so that if there is any chance of ponies kicking each other the weaker pony cannot be cornered; or it can be open the whole of one side.

In the winter, ponies will seldom use sheds. They will, however, gladly use the shelter of solid farm buildings. It seems as if they are scared of using a shed unless it is very solidly built. They prefer to lie out, however cold it is, even in snowy weather. True, they do sometimes feel the cold a good deal, especially cold winds and rain together. You will notice them then standing in the most sheltered place they can find with their hindquarters to the wind. We see then how stupid it is to deprive a pony of either tail or mane which not only protect him from bad weather, but defend him also from tormenting flies in summer. It is



essential that there should be shelter of some sort in their field, either fences, buildings or trees. Avoid fields enclosed only by wire fences, which give no shelter.

Ponies vary in hardiness. The pure-bred native pony who has been reared entirely in the open is, as one would expect, far the hardiest. If a pony has either thoroughbred or Arab blood he will naturally need more warmth. The thoroughbred has for generations had the warmth and comfort of a good stable, and the same is true of the Arab, who in addition comes from a warm climate. To keep a thoroughbred or pure-bred Arab out through the winter would be unwise; there is an old North country saying: 'Never turn thoroughbreds out through the winter. They come up knackers in the spring.'

Another point to consider is age. Young ponies can stand much harder conditions than old ones. Old ones should usually be brought in at night; if you have a stable, bring your pony in at night and give him a warm dry bed.

Condition must be carefully watched. A pony who is in poor condition suffers a great deal and should not be left out. One often sees such ponies creeping round a field in wintry weather looking as if they hardly have the strength to move.

In some districts ponies do well out, in others badly. This depends mainly on climate and the quality of the grass. The good horse-master will watch his pony carefully and make sure that he does not lose condition. He should be looked at at least once a day. Special care is needed in bad weather. If you go to your field and find your pony shaking with cold, get him into shelter, pile straw on his back, put a good rug over, and 'strip' his ears. You will find that to start with they are icy cold, but in a remarkably short time, if you pull them alternately gently through your hands ('strip' them), the warmth will come back to them. If the ears are warm he is warm all over. Give him a feed of some first-class chaffed hay with a few carrots or chopped mangold mixed in and he should be all right.

#### WATER

There should be water always in your pony's field, otherwise you will have to water him twice a day. Be very careful that the supply never dries up; horses are thirsty creatures in dry weather. If the grass is wet with rain or dew they naturally drink much less.

In winter make sure that the water supply is not frozen over.

Horses are particular about their water. You will notice that they have their preferences and much prefer one source to another, and they do not always select the sparkling spring water we like. Perhaps it is too cold.

## COMPANY

The pony is gregarious – he likes company. He prefers another pony (two or three ponies will do very well together) or he will make friends with a horse, and the bigger the horse is, the more he seems to admire him. Failing an animal of his own sort, he will be glad of the friendship of a donkey, or a goat, or one or two quiet cows, or young bullocks.

## FLIES

Two ponies together soon make bosom friends; do not always take them out together, or they may become inseparable, which is a nuisance. In hot weather you will notice that they stand head-to-tail, each one flicking the flies from the face of the other. If you have a pony who is docked (whose tail has been shortened) he will be left by himself to endure the torture of stinging flies without any possibility of ridding himself of them. If you have ever been badly bitten by mosquitoes or midges you will understand a little of what he suffers. Docked ponies should not be turned out until the cool of the evening when the fly menace abates. Fortunately, docking is now illegal, so that soon we shall see no more horses suffering from this barbarity.

## MANAGEMENT OF GRASS

If you keep your pony with a farmer you will have no trouble about grass-management. He will do his best and will move your pony round with his own stock. If you have to manage the grass yourself, you must consider several things.

Each pony should have about two acres of grass to run over. Let us suppose that you have two ponies and two two-acre fields. They like a change; therefore it is best to shut up one field and let them graze the other for a fortnight and then move them. Their delight at this is shown by much galloping around and throwing up of heels. Your aim should be to have the fresh field looking like a tennis-court in need of mowing, with grass about four inches high – no higher. Your pony only wants to eat the growing tips; long grass is no good to him, indeed if it is very lush it will give him colic. If, therefore, it gets too long you will have to persuade a farmer to run cattle or sheep over it to eat down the coarse patches.

Do not put manure of any sort on a field unless the ponies are off it for three weeks or more. Avoid ‘artificials’ which many people think are dangerous to stock.

## THE PONY IN SPRING

The feeding of your pony varies with the season, and also with the amount of work he is doing. Spring and summer are far the easiest. In winter you will have to take special care.

During April the pony changes his long rough winter coat for a short sleek summer one.

About mid-April, sometimes earlier, the lovely fresh spring grass begins to grow. You will find that your pony no longer finishes up his hay and you will be able to remove first his hay-net and then his feed-box. He will not look at hay if he can get good grass, and though he is always willing to eat oats, they would make him too fat. This is the best time of year for all outdoor stock. The hardships of winter are over, the best time of the year has come. The grass is of the highest feeding value through April and May, and your pony should be very well and very happy.

#### THE PONY IN SUMMER

In July, though there is often too much grass, it is not as good as in the spring. In most places it is difficult through the summer to keep your pony thin enough. If he gets too fat he will get lethargic and be a poor 'ride'. To prevent this it is often necessary to bring him into the stable in the day-time, where he will doze in contentment. No food will be necessary; he will get all he needs grazing at night-time. This treatment suits him very well because he will not be tormented by flies.

#### THE PONY IN AUTUMN AND WINTER

In autumn much of the value begins to go out of the grass. In September horses shift their coats; it is the 'blackberry season' and at this time they are inclined to get chills, so be extra careful. Do not put your pony in a strange stable if it can be avoided. Do not leave him after a ride standing in the stable 'to cool down'. It is then that he gets a chill. Turn him out the minute you get the saddle off. He will have a roll and start grazing and the air will soon dry him.

Some horses have a tendency after work to 'break out' (to sweat) after they have been brought into the stable. A good groom is on the look-out for this, and sets to work at once to get them thoroughly dry and comfortable. But if the horse is unclipped it is almost impossible to dry him, and he will soon get chilled through. If he is turned out, the air will dry him and he can move about and keep warm.

In September or October you will have to start hay-feeding. The goodness goes out of the grass, though there may still be plenty of it; and from then until April your pony will need hay once or twice a day.

He will himself tell you what he needs. When the grass is good he will not look at the hay; but when the grass is poor the hay will be most welcome. Give him an armful out in his field. He must finish up clean at each meal or the hay will be wasted – blown away by the wind or trodden under foot. To avoid this it is best to use a hay-net.



In October in addition to the hay he should start 'a feed' each day. This feed should if possible consist of a pailful of chaff with about one and a half pounds of oats in it. It should be given in a stout wooden box placed in the field.

If you are not riding, the hay will be enough, fed once or twice a day, according to his needs. But if he is expected to do any work he must have a 'feed' of oats too, or a substitute, fed in his box. This must be given once, twice or three times a day according to the amount of work you want him to do. The feeding through the winter is very much the same as if the pony were stabled.

## PART II: HAY, OATS AND OTHER FOODS

The pony's wants are very simple and easily supplied, and because of this very simplicity some people think that he can live on anything. It is true that he can exist on grass alone, or even poor hay. But his health, his happiness, his good looks, and his strength are entirely dependent on the quality of the hay and the other food with which you provide him.

### HAY

Grass is the important part of the grass-kept pony's diet, and equally important in the winter is his hay. In September or earlier you should make your purchases of hay for the whole winter if possible. The good horse-master will never rest until he is satisfied that he is a good judge of hay. Ponies must have the best hay procurable, and there never seems enough to go round; therefore there is always some difficulty about getting it. Unless you are a good judge you will be given second- or even third-rate hay. Good hay has been 'saved' in good weather. It smells sweet, it is greeny-brown in colour, and the grasses lie flat in little handfuls and are not confused. It should feel crisp and have plenty of flowering heads of grasses in it. Bad hay has been saved in bad weather. It has been left about too long. It has therefore got a little mouldy and dusty and musty. The grasses look all mixed-up and feel soft. Sometimes it is bad because it has been saved from poor pasture and you will see coarse grass and rushes in it.

Clover-hay can be identified by the large clover-leaves in it; it is excellent in moderation, but is too rich and fattening for regular use.

Order the best meadow-hay. The smallest quantity that can be bought is a truss, which is about as much as a man can carry on his back. Keep it very clean. Do not allow dogs to lie on it, and do not keep it over the garage near petrol fumes.

If you have a dry clean place for storage it is best to buy all the hay you need for winter consumption. But only do this if you are buying the best hay possible in your neighbourhood. If you know the farms round and have seen the hay

saved it is wise to buy direct from a farmer. In some years it is very difficult to buy good hay anywhere. If the hay is not good the pony's digestion becomes upset and his wind suffers. The pony is most particular. He can tell at a glance – perhaps it would be correct to say at a sniff – whether the hay offered him is good or bad, though human beings need a good deal of experience before they are good judges of hay. Let your pony decide which of two samples he would prefer you to buy for him. Cattle can eat hay which would be harmful to ponies. Calculate how much your pony will eat from October to mid-April, and buy half-a ton or a ton, or more according to the amount of good storage room you have. He will probably eat between 7 and 14 lb. a day according to his size, the weather, the grass and so on.

This is the measure for buying hay:

28 lb. – 1 qtr.

4 qtrs. – 1 cwt.

20 cwt. – 1 ton.

If the hay is good he should eat up every scrap; nothing should be left. If it is poor there will be some which will do him no good, so that you will have to give him an extra quantity so that he can select the best.

It is wise to buy a hay-net from your saddler. This is made of stout cord. You fill it up with the right amount of hay and carry it to your pony's field and hang it up, about level with his nose. This saves a lot of waste from hay getting trodden on, or blown away on a windy day. If there are several ponies they must each have a hay-net hung well apart, out of kicking distance – they are apt to be jealous at feeding-time.

#### CHAFF

Chaff, or chop, is hay cut up into lengths of about two inches. If you have a chaff-cutter it is wise to get some of your best hay chaffed. Put it into sacks and hang it up high out of the way of mice and rats. Do not chaff any hay except the best, because once it is chaffed it is impossible for the pony to pick out the good and leave the bad, which he can do with long hay. Poor chaff has no feeding value. If good hay is scarce, you can use one-third of oat-straw chopped up and mixed with the hay-chaff. More oat-straw than this is indigestible.

Always give chaff when you give oats, as it makes them more digestible. Fill a pail with chaff about three-quarters full and mix in the oats. This is called a 'feed'.

Never buy chaff from a forage merchant unless you feel certain that he can be trusted to make the chaff from the best hay only. The chaff will form the basis of feeds which must be given in a stout wooden box in the field – one for each pony. The exact amount of chaff is not of great importance. Fill your pail about three-quarters full, and add the other food to it.

If your pony has a weak digestion he sometimes prefers his chaff damp – not wet. Add about half a teacup of water and mix well.

#### OATS

Oats will not be needed if your pony is fat enough and has plenty of life. But if you notice that he is getting thin or has little life in him you may conclude that oats are needed.

It is easy to give too many oats; they upset the digestion. Your pony may then break out in large flat spots (surfeit) or he may become dull and lethargic; or he may get over-fresh, and buck his rider off. Or he sometimes gets fever in the feet and goes tender in front (even over-rich grass will have this result with some ponies).

Horses and ponies cannot digest large quantities of oats at one time. They only upset them and do them no good. If, therefore, you want to give your pony more oats, you must give him more feeds. A 15-hand horse can only digest 3 lb. at a feed; and if he is a hunter he gets about four feeds in the day. That would be 12 lb. A 12·2-hand pony would probably be able to digest about 1½ lb. at a feed.

Mix this with the chaff. The chaff is necessary to ensure mastication. If he does not eat up clean, reduce the amount of chaff next time. If he seems to need more give him a second feed in the day, also with 1½ lb. of oats in it. If he needs more still give a third feed. Watch him carefully and find the exact amount which suits him best.

Every pony is different and you cannot lay down hard and fast rules. A great deal depends on correct feeding. You will never have your pony at his best unless you are a good feeder; and that needs constant observation. Good feeders are very scarce; in a big stable the head man goes round with the oat-trolley at feeding-time and himself decides exactly what quantity each horse should get. This important matter is not left to thoughtless people. In less well-managed stables when it was easy to buy oats, it was not uncommon to see horses sent out half-mad with excitement through eating too many oats: or going 'footy' (slightly lame) because they were having more oats than they could digest.

Oats are bought by the bushel. They may be black or white and they should rattle if shaken in the hand. They should be plump, hard, dry and floury, and must taste nice and nutty and not bitter.

Ponies should be fed by weight. You will find that the best oats weigh heavy and poor oats weigh very light. Crushed oats also weigh very light.

In order to make sure how much you are giving your pony you must weigh out 1½ lb on the kitchen balance. Tip them into your measure and note carefully how much of it they fill. This will save you weighing again until you buy more oats, which may weigh out differently.



A wooden quartern measure bought from your saddler is a useful possession. It holds about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  lb. of oats. A quartern is a quarter of a peck, and 4 pecks go to a bushel.

The right feed for your pony would probably be rather more than half this quartern measure.

Crushed oats are wholesome and useful for ponies with weak digestions. If you notice whole oats in the dung, it means that they are not being digested, and therefore are doing the pony no good. Crushed oats, which are more easily digested, should therefore be given instead. Your corn-merchant will crush them for you. Be careful that they taste and smell sweet and not mouldy.

Do not make violent alterations in the pony's diet. If, for instance, he has been grass-fed for some time and you want him in harder condition as soon as possible, start by giving him one feed a day, and after a few days a second feed will not upset him. The feeding box must be solid, because most ponies when they have finished their oats hit their box with a forefoot, apparently believing that this violent treatment will have the effect of producing more oats. Of course there must be as many boxes as there are ponies, and they must be placed well out of kicking distance. If your ponies ever mean to kick at each other, jealousy over their dinner will make them do so.

Never give your pony water immediately after his oats; this is a common cause of colic. Water must always be given first, before the oats. If there is water in his field this rule does not apply, because if water is always within his reach, he will not drink too much.

#### OTHER FOODS

If oats are unprocurable, as they have been for so long, ponies should not be expected to do much fast work, and riders must be content to ride quietly, for it is impossible to have a pony in really hard condition without grain-feeding.

Many beginners have benefitted by the lack of oats because no one has had the chance of over-feeding their ponies and making them over-excitab<sup>le</sup>. On the other hand one sees ponies about in very poor condition and not fit for work.

Trouble must be taken to compensate for the lack of oats, by making up to your pony in other ways. You can make a mixture of chaff mixed with chopped mangolds, carrots, cabbage leaves, cooked potatoes or almost any kitchen-garden stuff. You will have to be very resourceful. Your pony must somehow be well fed. Remember that half of his value goes in at his mouth and unless he eats a good dinner he cannot give you a good ride. Fortunately horses are fond of all sorts of wholesome food, if they are trained to it, and will eat a great variety of things. I remember an old hunter who always shared his mistress's ham-sandwiches when he was out hunting. The great thing to remember is to introduce him very carefully to any new flavour until

he begins to like it. Even such favourite things as a bit of bread or a lump of sugar have to be first introduced in small quantities mixed with a handful of oats or chaff. Here are a few things which your pony will like, if they are given in a tactful manner.

#### *Chaff with Carrots, Mangolds, etc.*

Fill a pail about three-quarters full with chaff and mix into it a pound or two of chopped carrots or mangolds, or apples, or beetroot. This makes a change once a day from his hay diet. Never make it wet, or he will not like it. When giving such things as carrots and apples there is always a possibility of choking. They should therefore be sliced across longways, he should not be given knobby bits which might stick in the gullet.

#### *Bran*

Bran is wholesome and much liked. It should smell sweet. It must not be kept more than a fortnight as it soon goes musty. You can give about one-third bran instead of some of the chaff.

Bran-mash is a splendid pick-me-up for a tired pony, or a sick pony. Your pony will, however, need to get used to it before he likes it. It is wise therefore to make a practice of giving it to him say once a week until he gets keen on it, because it is the best possible food for a sick horse and he would refuse it when he was sick if you had not trained him to like it when he was well. Hunters get passionately fond of their bran-mash, which they always have after hunting. It is the perfect end to a hunting day.

A bran-mash must be well made. Put 1 lb. of bran in a pail. Pour on it boiling water, not enough to make it sloppy, but enough to damp through the whole mass. Add 1 oz. of salt and stir well. Cover with a clean stable rubber (*i.e.*, a duster) or with a handful of dry bran and leave for about an hour. It should then be given warm – *not* hot. If he is not used to a mash and does not like it, stir in a handful of oats.

#### *Linseed*

A valuable food for ponies in poor condition, specially if they are thin or if their coats look harsh and staring. Soak half a pound of linseed grain in cold water for twenty-four hours and give this jelly to the pony mixed in with his bran or chaff.

Always start with a small quantity, that he will hardly notice, until he gets to like the taste. A week's course of this should make a visible difference to his appearance. Or give one pound or less of linseed cake soaked in boiling water and mixed with the feeds. Or feed dry linseed; about one double-handful in the day.

*Salt and Sugar*

An ounce a day of salt for a change mixed with the chaff will be appreciated.

Sugar is a useful form of giving a tit-bit, and all ponies should be taught to like it; it is the surest way of keeping tempers sweet. A sugar knob is an odd thing to a horse who is not acquainted with it, and some training is needed to show him how to deal with it. Break it up into small bits and give it with a handful of oats or chaff. In a day or two when he has got to appreciate this pleasant sweet taste, the oats can be reduced until he will take a full-sized knob by itself.

If he gets unmannerly in his demands for tit-bits, it is plain proof that you are giving him too many.

*Kitchen refuse*

Carefully selected refuse made of potato-peelings, cabbage-stalks, celery-leaves, brussels sprouts, beetroot, parsnips, all made into a tasty pudding with bran or chaff, is much liked. Or better still, the same things from the kitchen garden, well washed.

*Potatoes*

These can be fed raw – about 1 lb. at a feed. Slice longways any that might cause choking. Do not peel them; the best part is just under the skin, as every Irishman knows. Or they can be boiled and mixed with bran or chaff.

*Beans*

Useful for old ponies who are suffering from exposure in cold weather. 1 lb. of oats and  $\frac{1}{4}$  lb. of old split beans would be a good feed for such a pony. They are, however, very heating, that is to say they excite the blood, which may make the pony too fresh or lead to inflammation. This inflammation often attacks the feet and makes a pony go as if his feet were tender.

## NOTES ON FEEDING

If your pony has only one feed, it is best given in the evening when work is done. If he has a second feed, give it first thing in the morning. It should be given two hours before work, so that he can digest it. If by chance you have to feed him after work do not give it immediately, because if he is tired he cannot digest it. Let him graze quietly for half an hour and then feed him. Feeding-times must be to the minute; he knows the time exactly. It does him no good to be waiting anxiously for half an hour in a biting wind hanging his head over the gate. He will soon lose condition.

Occasionally this mixture of dry feeding and grass seems to cause indigestion. Try sprinkling the dry feed with water and mixing it up, so that it is just damp



but on no account wet. This will probably suit him better. If your pony has any trouble with his wind this mixture will help him.

Horses are very cleanly feeders, and have a far keener sense of smell than we have. A dog should never be allowed to lie in the hay, or mice and rats be left to run over it; he will not eat it if he can get any that is cleaner. Clean out all dust and litter from his manger before you put his feed in. Avoid contamination from petrol fumes.

#### CONDITION

If your pony is well his eye should be bright and his skin should move easily over his ribs when the hand is put on them. It should not appear 'hide bound' as if it were stuck to his ribs. It is very important to study condition, and to watch your own pony and find out what suits him and what does not. Without condition your pony cannot work with satisfaction to himself or to you. He should do his work with pleasure and pride and will do so if he is given a fair chance. He will enjoy his work and need no whip.

If he is fit and well, you will see him sometimes having a boxing match with his pal, both standing up on their hindlegs. Or they will take a gallop round the field, manes and tails flying, and when you take him his feed and call, he will come up to you at a gallop.

A pony in good condition has rounded quarters, not flat angular ones. The lower line of his belly should run parallel with the ground, and not be either pendulous or 'tucked up' like a greyhound's. If it is pendulous, it shows that he is having too much grass, and he will be unable to do his work comfortably. If it slopes too much like a greyhound's the pony may be fit to run in a race, but he is not carrying enough flesh to withstand the sudden changes of temperature if he has to live out.

His neck should feel hard and muscular and not soft and flabby. The upper line of the neck should not be straight, and certainly not hollowed out, but it should be convex, and curve gracefully.

To keep in good condition he needs to be comfortable and happy. He will be much happier if he has one or two companions, and this will prevent him trying to break out of his field and wander away. If you cannot provide him with another pony, a donkey or a goat as a friend would be acceptable. Some of the things which make a pony unhappy are: noisy, rough people, thoughtless riders, an uncomfortable bit or saddle, hard or slippery streets, or bad shoeing; and of course overwork and underfeeding, or a bad field or bad stabling. You can see whether a pony is unhappy if you observe his anxious ears and eyes and general air of discomfort and dispiritedness, or nervousness.

If your pony has been doing no work you must get him into condition gradually. First one feed of corn a day; then after three or four days, two feeds each

day; and if necessary after another three days a third feed every day, and work in proportion. It takes time and he cannot be hurried. The old rule for hunters in stables was, get them up in mid-August and they will be fit for hunting in November. This seems a long time, but many horses used to come up in gross condition having been summered in lush fields.

Do not think that you can gallop your pony into condition: you will only gallop him into thinness or unsoundness.

Plenty of walking and slow trotting is the best means of getting him into condition. Try walking only for four days. Then a little slow trotting also, for the next four days; and then one or two short canters.

If you can turn out your grass-kept pony in good condition you may be proud of yourself. It is not easy to keep your pony just right when he is kept 'out'. The value of the grass is changing all the time, and so is the weather. It is far more important to understand grass and condition oneself, than to win a prize in the show-ring on a pony that has been conditioned by someone else. The subject of condition for the stabled horse has been very thoroughly studied, and if you want to keep your pony 'in' you must buy a good book on stable-management. Very little has been written about the condition of the outdoor pony.

## British Ponies

*British Ponies the Best in the World – The Pure-bred Native Pony – The Cross-bred Pony – Is it Possible to Improve the Native Pony? – Pony Societies – The Different Breeds – Ponies for Children over Fourteen – Thoroughbred Blood – Children's Ponies at the Shows*

### BRITISH PONIES THE BEST IN THE WORLD

WE have in the British Isles the best ponies in the world, and we have no excuse for making so little use of them. They inhabit those wild tracts of land which are unsuitable for cultivation, where they have lived for centuries.

If you ever go for a holiday to the New Forest, or Dartmoor or Exmoor, you should go and see these half-wild ponies at home. The herds, consisting of about a dozen mare ponies belonging to different owners and headed by a stallion, run wild on the moors. The stallion rules his family with a rod of iron; no mare is allowed to wander off on her own, she is promptly ordered back again by the stallion. If a younger and stronger stallion comes along there may be a terrific fight, and the ruler of the herd may be defeated and forced to give up some of his mares.

The little foals are born about May, and show extraordinary activity almost at once. They are among the prettiest of all the young things in the animal kingdom, with their ridiculous long legs, soft furry coats, big eyes and fluffy tails. You cannot usually tell in the first year of his life what colour a foal is going to be, unless he will allow you to pull out a little tuft of his hair, and underneath you will see his real colour. He may be as a baby a chestnuty yellow, and really underneath be a brown pony. Each little foal trots or canters beside its mother with head held high and beautiful action. For six months they lead a perfect life among the heather and bracken, seeing scarcely a soul, sublimely happy wandering by their mothers' sides.

At last, in the late autumn, comes the terrifying day when they are rounded up by that dangerous creature, man. They are separated from the mares, and driven off together, to be sold at the nearest market. Many are bought for the mines, some go abroad, and some – the happiest – are bought by individual pony lovers who think that the three years' waiting before their foal will be ready for light work is not too much to pay for the amusement and interest he will give.

This is the only time when it is possible really to select your pony. Later on, when these batches of foals are scattered to the far ends of the country, your choice





#### A NEW FOREST PONY

*A grand type of useful pony who would do well any job that was asked of her, and like all native ponies be able to live 'out' all the year round.*



#### A HIGHLAND PONY OF THE DRIVING TYPE

*All native pony breeds can be divided into driving and riding types. The riding type of the Highland, the Fell and the Connemara ponies are beautiful ponies for heavier riders.*



SHALL WE CHOOSE A MOOR-  
LAND PONY OR A THOROUGH-  
BRED TYPE LIKELY TO WIN  
AT A SHOW?

*A Moorland pony full of quality.  
Such a pony makes an admirable  
child's hunter and could be kept on  
grass all the year round.*



*A thoroughbred type of pony, which  
will win at a show but is quite  
unsuited for a child's hack or hunter.  
This sort of pony is expensive to  
keep, for he needs stabling and first-  
class stable management.*

will be limited. Many of these delightful potential children's mounts will in three years' time be quite unsuitable for children; some will have been ruined by harsh treatment, some will have been dragging carts and lost their balance, many will have had their mouths hardened. The number that have been in good hands and been properly treated will be small. The buyer should know what to look for, because nowadays the ponies at the various fairs are a mixed lot. The pure breeds are of definite type. The genuine pony always has a pony's head – small and neat with short prick ears.

#### THE PURE-BRED NATIVE PONY

The ponies seen roaming about in any pony district are of two types, pure-bred ponies and cross-bred ponies. The pure-bred ponies are few in number, and are immensely outnumbered by the cross-breds.

The pure-bred native ponies (the Mountain and Moorland ponies) make perfect mounts for children. It is impossible to imagine a more suitable mount, nor one that with long mane and tail is more beautiful and more in harmony with the country.

He is the perfect mount for the following reasons. He is full of quality. Quality goes always with pure blood and is associated with courage and high spirits. It is the reverse of commonness and sluggishness. It is the most important point to be looked for in a riding pony. Combined with quality the native pony is temperate, *i.e.*, he does not get nervous or irritable or over-excited or lose his head in a crisis; all of which traits cause accidents. He is good tempered, and has a charming disposition.

He is not a racehorse, and sensible people do not think that children should ride racehorses; but he can keep on galloping, and if he is in condition he never seems to tire. He is a natural jumper and his performances in the hunting-field with a good rider on him are remarkable.

He has more brains than his bigger brothers. They are necessary, as he has always had to fend for himself, and has never had the protection of a field or stable. He seldom loses his head or is seen in difficulties; he can always find a way out.

He has the soundest legs of all breeds of horses. Nature's law of the survival of the fittest has weeded out all weaklings. If you feel his legs they feel as if they were made of ivory, the bone is so hard.

As a hunter he is unbeatable and children are extremely lucky to have such an opportunity of acquiring a first-class hunter. The native pony is well shaped and narrow and the best of them could not be beaten as children's mounts. An M.F.H. looking at my two Exmoors observed, 'If those ponies were 16-hand hunters they would be worth £300 apiece'. A big breeder said to me, 'I have been trying to



breed a pony like that all my life and have never yet succeeded'. Most important of all he has a sound constitution and is the only member of the horse family who can be depended on to stand up to the outdoor life in winter. This is an extremely important point and I hope that readers will give it full consideration.

Nature has done her best for these ponies, and so long as the breed remains pure they can hardly be improved upon.

Unfortunately pure-bred native ponies are today very scarce. It does not pay to breed and break them, and breeders are up against continually increasing difficulties. There is in some districts great difficulty in controlling the herds owing to the gates of the big enclosures on main roads being constantly left open. On Dartmoor, Shetland stallions have been introduced and are cross-breeding and so ruining the Dartmoor breed. In the New Forest ponies are frequently killed or injured by motors. Each district has its own problems.

In the past the ponies were greatly helped by landowners. Today this help can no longer be given. Conditions in the country have changed and many people now take little interest in their local breed and hardly recognize it when they see it. Worst of all, the butcher's market still flourishes; he pays good prices, and buys pure-bred ponies as well as cross-breds. If the ponies are to be preserved, it is not likely that sufficient help will be forthcoming locally. One can only hope that help will come from those all over the country who are interested in children and their riding. For a large number of people believe that we have in the native pony the only pony really suitable for a child's riding. They realize that if a breed disappears it is gone for ever, and no power on earth can bring it back.

It is unfortunate that the value of the native pony has been for many years artificially lowered by the predilection of most show-judges for the thoroughbred type of pony. These ponies still carry off all the prizes at shows and therefore many people believe that they must be the best ponies for children. The fact that they are seldom of suitable temperament for children's riding, are certainly not hardy enough for the outdoor life, and in addition are very expensive to breed, is ignored. There are signs of improvement, however, and many shows have now special classes for the Mountain and Moorland pony so that the public will have more opportunity of seeing the different breeds.

#### THE CROSS-BRED PONY

The great majority of ponies seen in any pony district are not pure-bred. They are cross-bred. As the pure-bred ponies become more and more scarce, so do the numbers of cross-bred ponies increase.

No one should make the mistake of thinking that because a pony was born on Exmoor or in the New Forest he must be an Exmoor or a New Forest pony. It is quite likely that he has no native blood in him at all.

The majority of cross-bred ponies are chance bred. For instance, the baker's old mare, being past work, is turned out on the moor and mated with any stallion who happens to be about. This stallion may be a third-rate cart-horse colt. The resulting foal, being half-starved, does not grow and remains a pony in size. One cannot expect much of a pony like that, and such ponies are a disgrace to the horse world. Many are ill-formed little creatures, quite unfit for work of any sort; they would find it difficult even to drag a small cart, and their big clumsy heads proclaim their mixed ancestry. Others are weakly little animals – 'hardly fit to carry a pair of boots.' These last usually show a dash of thoroughbred blood and are unsuited for the hard life of the hills.

But cross-breeding is not always as bad as that, and among these cross-bred ponies a good judge may often pick out a good one. If care is taken over cross-breeding very good ponies should be the result. One excellent cross is pure-bred native pony on one side and Arab or thoroughbred on the other. The Arab cross would probably be the most suitable for children's riding.

It is noticeable that many native ponies show a likeness to the Arab in one point or another; the Arab and the native pony have perhaps a common ancestry. The stories that the Connemara and Highland ponies are descended from Arabs wrecked in the Armada, and that the Exmoor and the Welsh ponies have Arab blood, need proof. It is difficult to believe that the Arab pony coming from hot desert country could become sufficiently acclimatized to the wet mountainous country of Connemara, the Highlands, or Wales, or the West Country, to stamp his image successfully on a whole breed. If he managed to exist through the hardships of more than one winter it would be sufficiently remarkable.

#### IS IT POSSIBLE TO IMPROVE THE NATIVE PONY?

The only way to improve a breed is to select the best ponies within the breed and breed from them. This is what Nature had been doing for many generations. She weeded out ponies of weak constitution or those liable to unsoundness, and encouraged the hardiest and the soundest ponies. They alone were able to survive. The ponies had to be exactly suited to the places in which they lived; and therefore after some generations each breed had its own peculiar character.

Man has interfered with this very successful process of natural selection, with the result that the pure-bred ponies have become very scarce, and their place has been taken by much inferior animals.

There are not many pure-bred ponies left, and these few are the very valuable foundation stock of their particular breed. If we have no foundation stock the breed must disappear and on both Exmoor and Dartmoor, which used to be the home of some of our best children's ponies, foundation stock is at a very low ebb.

Anyone who tries to buy a pure-bred pony in the West Country will realize this. Pure blood is of vital importance, for once gone it can *never* be replaced.

Pure stock is of importance for another reason. The native pony comes into the pedigree of all ponies. Without this blood it is impossible to get the small sizes which are wanted. And if those who are interested in breeding show-type ponies (ponies with a large amount of thoroughbred blood) did not have the pure-bred native pony to draw on but had to fall back on cross-breds with very mixed ancestry, they would find their difficulties greatly increased.

Some people think that a breed can be improved by cross-breeding. But this is a fallacy. Cross-breeding only destroys it. Children who keep dogs know that by crossing, say, a pure-bred West Highland terrier with a pure-bred Cairn, you may get a nice dog, but he will be cross-bred and therefore of little value – nor can he ever produce pure-bred puppies. It is just the same with ponies.

Another fallacy is that the ponies would be greatly improved if they were larger. But anyone who knows the pony-breeding districts realizes that the country is quite unable to support a bigger breed. Nature has produced an animal suited to its own environment and could not support a larger one. The thoroughbred or Arab or their progeny would hardly survive the winter hardships. Moreover there are plenty of larger ponies to draw upon if they are wanted. It is the small ponies of riding type which are so scarce. If readers will turn to p. 27 they will see a small girl mounted on an Exmoor pony of the usual size, 12·2 hands. This pony is a good deal too big for the child, who is about five, and will not be really suitable for her until she is much older. Small children are in fact nearly always considerably over-mounted. I hope I have said enough to show children that pony-breeding is not in a satisfactory state. It needs all the encouragement and care that the pony-lover can give it. Every child can help by taking trouble really to understand the facts.

#### PONY SOCIETIES

Each breed has its local society to look after its interests. All the breeds have their own stud-books, and anyone who wants to buy a pure-bred pony would do well to apply to the local society of that particular breed. The National Pony Society, 17 Devonshire Street, London, W. 1. would supply the addresses.

This society looks after the breeds as a whole. Without such societies the pure-bred pony would by now have vanished and children would be infinitely worse off than they are. Both the local societies and the National Pony Society need a great deal more support from the public than they get.

#### THE DIFFERENT BREEDS

We must now consider the various breeds of Mountain and Moorland ponies. There is great variety among the different breeds as to size, make and shape, and



suitability for different work. Every breed has in it ponies both of riding and of driving type. The driving type of ponies are more cobby and heavily built than the riding type, and though they can be ridden they are not such good mounts.

I hope no one will think I have treated their special breed unfairly. I have seen very little of some breeds and much of others. I notice everybody is inclined to say there is no breed like that which he himself knows most intimately. This only shows what wonderful little creatures our ponies are.

The *Exmoors* are a magnificent breed; they run from 12-13 hands high. The usual colour is dark brown with a mealy nose; there are also a fair number of bays. They are more true to type than any pony breed because they come as a whole of purer pony stock, and have had much care expended on them in the past by various pony-lovers, to whom our gratitude is due.

No one can see them running wild on the moor, each mare followed by her distinguished high-stepping little foal, without falling in love with them. Bred among the heather and fern, and galloping by their mothers over rough and often boggy ground, up and down hill, they are amazingly sure-footed. In the autumn the six-months old 'suckers' are rounded up by the Exmoor farmers and driven in batches to Bampton, near Dulverton. There they may be bought for about £5 apiece. Bigger ponies with large coarse heads usually fetch more but obviously are not Exmoors. Cross-breeding is now common on Exmoor, but the buyer should be able to recognize the genuine pony – small, with a small head, short prick ears and big eyes, dark brown or bay with no white, and with a mealy nose (a nose which looks as if it had been dipped in a bucket of meal). They are wild with fright at the rough treatment which is usually their portion, long-coated and big-eyed, and all pony-lovers would wish to buy the lot and be sure that they had decent breaking and a happy life before them.

They make first-class children's ponies; they are full of quality, extraordinarily sound and sure-footed, they carry their heads high, which gives them balance, and they have a characteristic outlook as if they were gazing into the far distances of their wild hills. They are sweet-tempered and affectionate, and the two I am proud to possess will stand side by side in a stall, eating out of the same manger, without any of the nabbing at each other and jealousy, which is one of the weak spots of other horses. They are in fact gentlemen. Shoulders and hind-quarters are both excellent, as one would expect of a breed which is always going either up or down a hill. They make first-class hunters and are natural jumpers. Some of them are inclined to be a little thickset, and a narrow pony should be selected. They need careful and slow breaking, because owing to their wild lives they start handicapped by lack of knowledge of man and are consequently extremely nervous. (See pp. 93 and 166.)

The *Dartmoor* ponies are suffering from many of the same difficulties which beset the Exmoors, added to which Shetland stallions have been turned out on

the moor to add confusion to the breed. Many children in the past have had cause to be grateful to the Dartmoor ponies, and it will be a thousand pities if they and the Exmoors are allowed to disappear. The Dartmoor is usually brown, black, or bay, 12·2 hands, very hardy and a grand hunter.

The *New Forest* ponies make splendid children's mounts, and are good hunters. They are a size bigger than the West Country ponies, usually 13 hands or more. There is more grass in the Forest as the land is not nearly so high up as on Exmoor and Dartmoor, and is therefore able to support a bigger pony. There are many greys, roans and browns among them. At one time the breed deteriorated a great deal from cross-breeding. But in the last twenty-five years their local society, possessing a very efficient Honorary Secretary, has done a great deal to improve them. Large enclosures are reserved for part of the year where carefully selected stallions are kept and where mares may be brought. Under this policy the breed is steadily improving. They also have the great advantage that they are not so nervous as many breeds because they see so much more traffic. (See pp. 111 and 165.)

The *Welsh Mountain* ponies as seen at shows do not exceed 12·2 hands. They are beautiful ponies with an Arab look about them. A child who wants 'a pretty pony with a long mane and tail' would be well suited with one of them. Some of them are fed in the winter and, therefore, bigger ponies may be found out on the Welsh hills. The fairs are held in May and October.

Welsh ponies and cobs have always had a great reputation and their good looks win them many prizes. Many Welsh ponies have been bred for harness work and have beautiful trotting action for harness. They fetch big prices and no one can fail to be charmed with these atoms of energy incarnate flying round the ring at a show. But this type must be avoided if you want a riding pony. (See pp. 94 and 183.)

The *Shetlands* are the smallest of all. It is difficult to understand how they have acquired their great reputation as riding ponies. The majority of them are far more suited to drag a cart than to carry a child. They are immensely broad in the back, and their necks are so thick that the bit has no control. Either of these defects is fatal to a child's pony.

Their minute size and good temper make them, however, charming children's pets. They are well suited for a nurse to lead about at a walk, if it is considered that their breadth will not be likely to prove harmful. Very small ponies are hard to find and it is a pity that Shetlands suitable for riding are scarce.

The *Dales and Fell* ponies are hardly children's ponies; they are more suitable for general utility work and for riding or shooting ponies, being thickset and sturdy. They are very sound, hard-working and good-tempered.

The *Highland* ponies are good riding ponies, usually grey. They are strong and sturdy and well suited for bigger riders. They are divided into small ponies 12·2 to 13·2 and larger ones 13·2 to 14·2. Like the Connemara ponies they are sweet-tempered and gentle, good hunters, and never tire. (See p. 111.)

The *Connemara* ponies are 14·2 and over, of an excellent type and well suited for children over 14. They are mostly grey – a protective colouring very hard to see among the huge grey boulders of the Connemara Mountains. They are unusually gentle and sweet-tempered, and easy to break. They have beautiful heads of distinct Arab type. The Government of Ireland has for many years given these ponies a grant to encourage the breed. They realize its importance in the production of the world-famous Irish hunter. There is now an English Connemara Pony Society.

Anyone who wants to know more about our native ponies will find much information in the National Pony Society's book *Mountain and Moorland Ponies*.

#### PONIES FOR CHILDREN OVER FOURTEEN

Those who are over fourteen, including small light-weight grown-ups, can be well mounted on one of the larger breeds of ponies who could be kept out all the year round. If they have a stable they can choose a native pony crossed with either thoroughbred or Arab. These ponies are usually about 14·2 – 15·1 hands and make first-class mounts. Or they could buy a pony of polo type; these ponies are usually charming animals to ride, but they measure 15 hands and over and as now bred are more horses than ponies.

#### PONIES WITH THOROUGHBRED BLOOD

The thoroughbred horse is a splendid animal. He is also called 'a blood horse', 'a well-bred horse', 'clean-bred', 'pure-bred', or alluded to as being 'in the book' *i.e.*, in the thoroughbred stud-book. He is bred for racing, and in his right place, as a racehorse, a steeplechase horse, or a hunter, he is unbeatable. There are no thoroughbred ponies. It is not possible to get a small-sized animal without native pony blood; but some of the children's show ponies have so much thoroughbred blood that they appear to be pure thoroughbred. Some people think that a very well-bred pony is the ideal mount for a child-beginner, but surely nothing can be more unsuitable. So far as looks go, there is nothing against him, it is his temperament which is so often the stumbling block. In searching for a child's pony temperament is of more importance than anything else. Everybody knows that the thoroughbred or well-bred horse is likely to be highly strung and excitable, mad on galloping and easily upset. The well-bred pony suffers from exactly the same troubles. No mount is more delightful for a first-class rider, nor can anything be less suitable for a beginner, and by a beginner I mean a child who has not ridden for more than three years.

Unfortunately these well-bred ponies are in great favour in the show-ring. A well-bred pony with a really good rider on him looks extremely well in the show-ring, but how many are to be seen carrying a beginner quietly in the hunting-



field? I take an immense interest in every child's pony I see, but I cannot recollect one. I can, however, recollect numerous instances of well-bred ponies who have 'run away', bucked their riders off, tired them out by pulling, or somehow succeeded in scaring them.

One of these well-bred ponies, beautifully made, was seen at a local show. As far as looks went he was the winner, but the judge fortunately was one who realized the essential points of a child's pony. 'Make him gallop,' he said to the tough little rider. The boy knew what the result of a gallop would be, he therefore kept his pony cantering beautifully round the ring. 'Let him go,' said the judge, and the boy, seeing there was no help for it, let him go. Round the ring he went two or three times, the pony moving to perfection. 'Now pull him up,' said the judge, but that was not so easy. The feeling of turf underfoot goes like wine to the head of a thoroughbred pony. The boy made desperate efforts to stop him, but it was obvious that he could not do it until the pony had had his gallop out. He was therefore quite rightly disqualified.

Those who own a well-bred pony who is too much for his rider will find that if kept out at grass during the summer he will entirely alter his character, and indeed may make an excellent child's pony. But in the winter these ponies need care and will probably require the protection of a stable; and it is when stabled and short of exercise, and possibly oat-fed, that accidents occur.

Neither a well-bred pony nor a common plebeian is wanted, but a Mountain pony, full of pony quality – not so fast as the thoroughbred pony but of a far more equable disposition and a sweeter temper, and much more likely to bring the beginner safely home again after a ride or help him to bear 'the brush' victoriously home after a day's hunting.

#### CHILDREN'S PONIES AT THE SHOWS

If entered in a children's class the Moorland pony has but a remote chance of winning a prize. The present fashion is in favour of well-bred ponies, and a well-bred pony who behaves decently in the show-ring will most certainly carry off the prize. However good the Moorland pony may be, however sure the judge may feel in his own mind that he is likely to be more suitable for a child's riding, and as a child's hunter, he is not the prize-winning type, and to the prize-winning type the prizes go. The same thing has often been seen in the dog-world. A shepherd would never dream of looking for a good working collie in the show-ring. Nor would an M.F.H. look among the long-nosed, spindle-legged show-terriers for a working terrier; he would search for one in neighbouring kennels who had been bred to the work and proved his courage. To discover which is the best type of child's pony we must look elsewhere. The more searching tests of the hunting-field, pony hunter-trials, and handy-pony competitions will reveal the Moorland pony's merits.

# Choosing the Pony

*Difficulty of Buying – Choosing the First Pony – What to Look For – Choosing the Second Pony –  
How to Buy – Hiring an Old Pony – A Month's Trial*

## DIFFICULTY OF BUYING

IN spite of the large numbers of ponies bred on our mountains and moorlands it is not easy to buy a good one, nor does the position seem likely to improve. Good ponies are not being bred in any numbers. The difficulties facing breeders are too great.

Conditions in the pony districts have changed so much in the last twenty years that it is almost impossible to keep the breeds pure out on the hills. If they have to be brought down, and kept on good land, the cost must be greatly increased. Moreover the pony would not be likely to retain his type, though there are two opinions about this.

The purchaser has before him the choice of three different types of pony:

(1) Far and away the most suitable is the pure-bred native pony, and would-be purchasers cannot do better than get in touch with the National Pony Society or the local society which is responsible for the breed they fancy.

(2) The cross-bred pony. These ponies, good, indifferent and bad, form the vast majority of the ponies now running on the hills, or already broken and being ridden by children. Many of them make excellent mounts.

(3) The easiest type of pony to buy today is a weedy little 'well-bred' pony. The production of this useless type has been encouraged by the show policy of the last twenty years, for nearly all judges favour a pony showing thoroughbred blood. They seldom make good children's ponies for the following reasons. They are usually excitable. A large number have no shoulders. They are not usually strong enough to winter 'out'. They are usually speedy little animals, but this is not desirable in a beginner's pony.

## CHOOSING THE FIRST PONY

It is worth while to pay a good price for a good pony. To own a bad pony is very poor economy; he will be a source of constant disappointment through perhaps many years. The cost of a pony counts little against the total expenses of many years' keep. Good breeding and good breaking are expensive and worth paying for. Let your motto be 'Buy the best and be proud of him'.

A good pony cannot be bred cheaply. He should also have more careful breaking than a hunter because in order to suit a child he should be unusually well mannered.

He should be handled from birth, broken at three, and carefully ridden by a good light-weight horseman until he is four and a half. If he is the right sort we shall then be able to trust him in unskilled hands. A pony who has the right temperament and has had this careful breaking and supervision should turn out well. But the breaker's time is sometimes wasted. If his pupil has the wrong temperament no amount of careful riding will make a beginner's pony of him; and such a pony will be a dead loss. Obviously pony breakers can never make a fortune. I do not know how many skilled hours of breaking a pony needs, certainly a great many, and skilled work must always be expensive.

Ponies who are subdued by methods of semi-starvation and over-work, as many of them are, may be quiet enough, but they are not likely ever to be comfortable rides. This harsh method ruins their balance and spoils them in other ways. It used to be possible to buy a good well-broken pony for about £30. Nowadays the price would be much more. A pony is, however, far less liable to accident than a hunter, and far sounder. His purchase should be looked upon as an investment, because, if he is carefully bought and is not spoilt, he should be as good or even better in three or four years than he was when bought. And he should live until he is thirty. When his owner has outgrown him he should be sold to another beginner. He will thus teach several different children to ride. He is therefore in quite a different category to the hunter who is unfortunately usually soon worn out.

It is the first pony which needs such care in choosing, as it is this pony which will probably make or mar the child rider. Do we not all know instances of children who started their riding career hopefully and gave up after a few months. Why? Nearly always because the pony was not suitable. He disappointed them because they could not catch him or bridle him, or because they thought he meant to kick. Or he frightened them because he pulled, or because he shied or bucked them off. Or perhaps they found him dull, because they could hardly get him along, and could not persuade him to trot or canter freely – and these sluggish ponies are almost as bad as those who are too keen. One occasionally sees one fast asleep even amid the thrills of a meet of hounds!

This first pony, for which so many people grudge paying a fair price, is of far more importance than any subsequent mount which the child may have, for if the first pony is a failure, he will quite probably give up riding altogether. If his first pony is the right one, he will not only teach the child to ride, but he will give him a good seat and light hands and these are worth paying for.

There is no harm in a man economizing on his own account. If he understands horses he can buy cheaply at auction and take his risks. It is very different with



a child's pony; the more inexperienced the rider the more carefully must the mount be selected. If one considers that a trick like shying or bucking disqualifies a pony for the post of carrying a beginner, we see that many ponies must be turned down for comparatively harmless tricks which no one would trouble about in a mount for more experienced riders. If economy is essential a cheap pony should be sought for among the less good-looking or the old; but a cheap pony is not likely to be an investment and a really good pony is probably cheaper in the end.

The first pony should not be kept too long. In three or four years the child will have outgrown him, and it does a child no good to ride a pony which is too small for him. Moreover in two or three years the first pony will have taught the child a great deal, and he should be able to advance another step in his riding career.

This forward step is important both for the sake of the child and of the pony. As children progress in their riding they sometimes forget how much their first pony has taught them and how much they owe him, and they find him a little too quiet. It is at this stage that many excellent children's ponies may be spoilt by being raced about, or ridden roughly or taught to buck. They are then of no more use as beginners' ponies, and all the time spent originally on careful breaking is wasted. A wise child who has the root of the matter in him will make it a point of honour to hand on his pony to another owner without any tricks and as near perfection as possible. This is a debt he owes not only to his parents but to his pony, because a pony with bad manners will be unable to keep a good home and will soon go downhill.

#### WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Do not be too particular about the first pony's looks, but judge him for the following points, which are arranged in order of their importance. Temperament and manners are of far more importance than anything else. If either are wrong do not consider him, no matter how many prizes he may have won, or how attractive he may be.

##### *Temperament*

The pony must be kind and gentle in the field and in the stable. When mounted he must not be too keen and excitable, for nothing is more upsetting to a beginner than the feeling that his pony is too fresh and is bent on going fast when he himself is feeling insecure and wants to go slower. Neither must he be a slug, for nothing is so dull to ride, and a beginner is quite unable to urge a slug into activity; moreover he will teach a beginner bad ways and allow him to think that a pony can be hauled about as if he were a cow. The right temperament will be found somewhere in-between these two extremes. It is inborn and has little to do with breaking.

On no account must he be nervous either in the stable or on the road. Nervousness is hard to cure and is the cause of many accidents. Nor must the pony be rough; this is a common fault of half-broken ponies.

The importance of the right temperament cannot be over-estimated. It is far and away the most important thing to look for. This matter is better understood than it was, but one still frequently sees children mounted on unsuitable ponies. How many grown-ups would go out riding if they knew their horse would run away with them or if they feared he was going to shy, and were quite certain that when he did so they would tumble off? And yet children are sometimes sent out under such conditions, and unless they have good nerves they may take a dislike to riding. Temperament must come first. It is the lack of the right temperament that condemns the thoroughbred and many well-bred ponies for children. Even with our mountain and moorland ponies the difficulty invariably is to get them quiet enough; a great many of them are too excitable; some of them are very nervous.

Those who are good judges of a horse sometimes find it difficult when they buy a first pony to remember that they are not primarily in search of a good-looking pony — they are in search of a quiet one. They are apt to be carried away by a pony who is well made and forget that temperament must come first. Perhaps this is the reason why one often finds that children of good horsemen are not keen on riding. An uncle of mine who was a very good judge of New Forest ponies chose such brilliant ponies for his family that they all lost their nerves at an early age. As a child I had an idea that one of the characteristics of the New Forest pony was that he always ran away both in harness and when being ridden! Good-looking ponies are easy to find; quiet ponies with good paces are very scarce. A friend recently bought two so-called quiet ponies for her children, who were all beginners. They rode one of them successfully but were scared of the other. A rider with a lifetime's experience volunteered to ride it. She mounted and sat successfully through three determined bucks, but the fourth put her down. What chance has a beginner on such a pony?

### *Good Manners*

Having assured ourselves that the pony does not seem either excitable or sluggish, and that he appears to be friendly, we must now consider his manners. These are the result of good training, and every pony can be taught good manners if the trainer is good enough. Once he has been well taught he will never do wrong so long as he remains in expert hands. But here mistakes are often made, for beginners are not experts, and therefore it by no means follows that because a pony may be seen going perfectly with an expert that he will continue to do the same with a beginner. For this reason a large number of ponies who do well in the show-ring, with expert riders or under expert supervision, may do badly if bought for the genuine beginner.

Those in search of the right pony would do well to see the child-owner catch the pony, and bridle it and saddle it himself quite unaided. It should be a snaffle-mouth pony, and the child should be able to ride it, either alone or in company, both down a quiet lane and down a road with traffic. He should be able to walk, trot and canter away from other ponies wherever he wants to go. He should be able to make the pony 'back' one or two steps smoothly. A well-mannered pony has no tricks and will do what his child-rider wants.

This sort of pony will soon give his rider confidence and teach him to ride. He is worth his weight in gold.

### *Size*

One constantly sees children mounted on ponies which are many sizes too large for them. A child well-mounted should, when the stirrups are the right length, have the sole of his foot about level with the lower line of the pony's belly. (Compare the pony illustrated in the frontispiece with those on pages 27 and 57.) If the pony is too big the child cannot sit correctly or use his legs properly.

Children under twelve usually need ponies of 12·2 hands. Those under fourteen need ponies about 13·2, and those under sixteen from 14·3 downwards (a hand is four inches, the width of a man's hand). Those measurements are for moorland ponies whose ribs are well-sprung.

Some children think that if they can sit on a great big 16-hand horse, it shows that they are better riders than if they rode a pony. They are making a mistake, because it is impossible to ride a horse properly unless your legs reach the right place on his sides. Children who sit on these big horses are merely what horsey people call 'passengers'. They cannot ride them, they are only able to sit on them because the horse happens to be of a particularly quiet disposition. Now a child who has the knowledge can really ride a pony as he should be ridden, and when his legs are longer he will find that there is no more difficulty – indeed very often less – in riding a big horse.

A narrow pony is wanted and many of our moorland ponies are just the right type.

A broad, thickset pony is no good; one might just as well mount a grown-up on a carhorse. The child cannot sit in the right position on such a pony or use his legs correctly. In addition to this such animals have rough action; they are unsuitable for riding and should keep to harness-work.

### *Action*

A good walk is most important. The pony should stride out well and walk fast without stumbling. The trot should be springy and lively. He should neither shuffle along near the ground nor pound along noisily picking his knees up high.



The forelegs should be thrown right forward so that he covers plenty of ground at each stride. Get behind him as he trots away and satisfy yourself that the forelegs are thrown straight forward and not out to right or left – this is a common fault.

The canter should be easy and smooth, not rough and rolling.

Of two ponies equally good as to temperament and manners, select the one who is the best mover, *i.e.*, who walks the fastest and trots and canters the best. Avoid a pony who stumbles or knuckles over or catches his foot on every inequality; these are signs of weakness. If he gives you 'a good feel', *i.e.*, if you enjoy his paces, you need not bother too much about his shape.

### *Shape*

If you train your eye you will soon improve as a judge and when you come to your second pony it will be much easier to choose the right pony.

The way to train your eye is this. Collect photographs of horses from the papers, and stick them into a scrapbook. Go over them from time to time comparing one horse with another, studying heads, shoulders, quarters, middle-pieces and so on. Better still, study every pony you see. Horse-shows are very useful for this study. Stand well back from the pony and view him as a whole. If you half-close your eyes, as an artist does, you will be able to eliminate details. It is important to be a judge of ponies both in condition and out of condition ('in the rough'). The last is much more difficult.

A good Moorland pony is built on the lines of a weight-carrying hunter. (See p. 112.) A show-type pony is built like a racehorse.

Divide him mentally into three. He should have a fairly small middle-piece and two good ends – the forehand and hindquarters. If he is built like this the saddle should sit plumb in the middle of his back, and not perched forward on his withers. Many ponies are just the opposite. They have large bodies with either small weak forehands or small weak hindquarters.

These 'two good ends' must be well developed – plenty of them. The shoulders should be long and sloping so that there is 'plenty in front of you'. With bad shoulders – shoulders that are short and upright – you feel as if there is very little in front of you and that it would be easy to fall over your pony's head. The pony should require 'a long rein': when a pony has steep shoulders and can be ridden with short reins he is 'short in front'. Shoulders are difficult for the novice to judge, and it is easier to come to a decision by the feel he gives you when you are mounted. A pony with good shoulders feels as if he could not fall; if you trot him down a slope over rough ground he does it as if there is no difficulty whatever about it. A pony with bad shoulders gives you the feeling that he may pitch on his head, or he may stumble, or catch his foot. The native pony is better on his feet than any other breed; they seem as if they cannot fall. The pony on p. 129 has unusually good shoulders.

The hindquarters must be well-developed and full of muscle as viewed from the side. Viewed from behind he should also be muscular. The muscles should be so well developed that his thighs are close together – he should on no account be ‘split up behind’. This conformation is weak, and goes with a weakly constitution.

The middle-piece must be comparatively small. You do not want a pony with a huge belly and two small ends. Try and buy a pony the lower line of whose belly is neither rounded like a melon, nor tucked up like a greyhound’s, but which runs parallel with the ground. The first type will be inclined to be lazy, and the second probably over-excitabile and a bad doer. The shape of the belly depends largely on condition, and the outdoor pony should carry more flesh than a stabled one.

Legs and feet are most important. Fortunately ponies are far sounder than horses. The front legs need careful attention as they are the most likely to go wrong. They should be straight; get right in front of your pony and look at them. A line drawn down the centre of each knee should drop plumb through the centre of the hoof. Crooked legs are fairly common – some ponies turn their toes in, some have their feet too close together. All these things may lead to unsoundness, though the soundest mare I ever knew had one foot badly turned in.

Look also at the forefeet. They should be pairs; if one is bigger than the other it means disease. They should also be round; this is best seen when you pick a foot up, and look at the sole.

There is not often anything wrong with the hindfeet.

I remember a child saying she wanted a pony with flowing mane and tail and very thin legs. Flowing mane and tail are quite right but thin legs are not good. Looked at from the side the legs should measure well from front to back. If you grasp the leg just below the knee you will get an idea of whether the bone of the leg measures well. But if the legs feel fleshy or gummy they are ‘filled’. That is a sign of weakness. After a day’s hunting the owner is often seen running his fingers down his hunter’s forelegs with a worried look on his face; pony owners are generally free from this anxiety.

The pony’s head is most important. The head of the Moorland pony is small, neat and short. The head of the cross-bred or thoroughbred is very often a long horse’s head and not a pony’s.

The eyes should be large and kind. They should be neither nervous nor excitable. The ears of the Moorland pony are short and alert, the ears of the thoroughbred are long and pointed. Some ears are common and sluggish looking.

Choose a pony with a head full of character. Some ponies have heavy, stupid expressions; some look excitable or nervous; a few (among the modern thoroughbreds) look foolish and undeveloped as if they will never grow up. Avoid all these and look for character, a good heart and a bold one. The head of the worst

and most expensive hunter I ever owned was lacking in character and courage though she was perfect in shape.

The neck should be well shaped, and in proportion to the body. If it is too thin or too long, it indicates weakness, if it is too short the pony will be awkward to ride.

*Age, Colour, Mane and Tail, Soundness*

Seven years old is perhaps the perfect age; the pony then combines youth and wisdom. But do not hesitate to buy a well-preserved fifteen-year-old, though at this latter age the price should be less. As ponies age they naturally need more care and comfort, though they are much longer lived than horses.

Two- and three-year-old ponies have often been sold to people ignorant of horses, who think they are buying something much more mature. Very white pearly teeth are a sign of youth. After four the teeth have a yellow tinge. These young ponies are of course unsuitable for anything but slow and light work, and they will be quite different animals by the time they reach six years, which is the age at which the grass-fed pony is mature. More important still, a young pony will most certainly deteriorate in the hands of a child, unless he has the most careful supervision.

Colour is immaterial, but we want it good of its sort, a rich bay or chestnut or brown – not washy, as this points to a poor constitution.

A ‘chestnut’ pony has a good deal of yellow in his coat. Light chestnuts are often excitable.

A ‘bay’ is the colour of a ripe horse-chestnut.

A grey pony is usually a good one and often very beautiful, and his dark eyes add to the beauty of his head. Greys go white as they age. It is very rare to see a white foal.

A blue roan is a dark grey or a bluish shade.

A red roan is a grey with reddish hairs through it.

There are many good roan ponies. It is a hardy colour and they are likely to have the right temperament.

A piebald is a black and white pony.

A skewbald is a brown and white pony.

Queen Victoria’s famous cream-coloured horses were very handsome in a procession, but horse-lovers did not care very much about them, and they had pink noses which reminded one of ferrets. This colour is very rare; I believe they came from Hanover.

If a pony is clipped in the winter, you will be surprised at the difference in his colour, and he will not be so beautiful in his clipped coat. A bright bay will perhaps clip out brown. A good rich brown will clip out a dull slaty-brown colour.





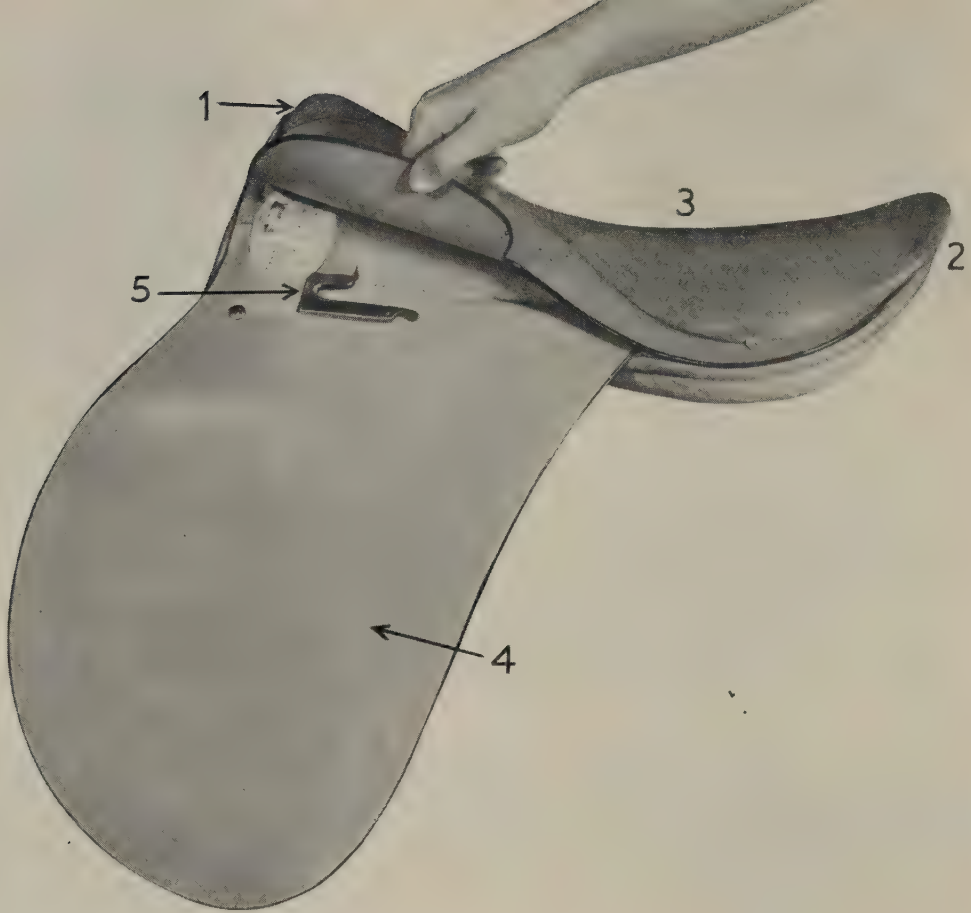
#### THOROUGHbred TYPE OF PONY

*This pony has won many prizes in classes for small children. Most judges like a pony with a strong infusion of thoroughbred blood; this blood can clearly be seen in this photograph. Unfortunately the thoroughbred is seldom suited for a child's hack or hunter, except under expert grown-up supervision—his temperament is wrong and his speed is an added danger.*



#### ANOTHER SHOW WINNER

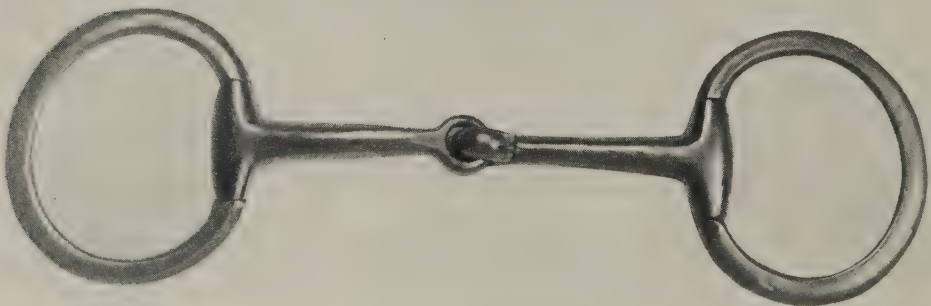
*Another show winner modelled on a light weight hunter and far more likely to be suitable than the thoroughbred type. Both would be difficult to breed and must therefore always be very expensive.*



#### A LEATHER HUNTING SADDLE

1. Pommel; 2. Cantle; 3. Seat; 4. Leather Flap; 5. Safety Bar, on which the stirrup leather hangs. The catch on the safety bar should always be left down as in this photograph, when the rider is mounted.

*A leather saddle when new is slippery. A felt saddle is not only more comfortable for the rider but will fit every type of pony from 12.2 to 14.3 hands. It should have a tree in front but not behind.*



#### JOINTED SNAFFLE

*Showing mouthpiece and rings. This is the best bit for a well-broken pony; the joint gives a little play.*

If there is any doubt about the colour, the point is decided by the colour of the nose; for instance, a black horse may have a brown muzzle, and then he is called a brown.

A good guess at the age of a young pony may be made by observing his tail. Up to six months old he has a short fluffy tail rather like a fox's brush. At two years old his tail reaches his hocks, at three years old it reaches the ground. At five it changes from a rather heavy tail to a lighter and more graceful switch.

Ponies are far sounder as a whole than horses; perhaps their commonest trouble may be looked for in their feet from neglected shoeing, or in their wind from mouldy hay or working when their last meal is undigested. If you want your pony to live out, buy an outdoor pony – his coat will of necessity be rough; and this rough coat causes him to be under-valued by those who judge superficially.

A great judge of horses told us to remember that a chain is only as strong as its weakest link. If your pony has one weak link it is there that he will fail. However strong the chain may be otherwise, the one weak link will be his undoing. A plain pony with no weakness will do you better than a brilliant pony with one weak spot of character or conformation.

#### CHOOSING THE SECOND PONY

When we come to the buying of the second pony, we can proceed much after the manner of a man buying a hunter, that is to say we can pay a great deal more attention to performance and looks and not so much to temperament and manners.

The most important thing of all about the pony, however, is that he should suit his rider. It is useless to buy a brilliant pony if he does not suit you personally. Good second ponies are easier to find than first-rate beginners' ponies. If the child has profited by his three years' riding on his first pony he should be able to deal with such tricks as shying, bucking, pulling or being difficult to catch.

The second pony should be as well made as possible and have beautiful paces. His walk especially should be fast and lively, for if it is sluggish the rider will be constantly tempted to indulge in faster paces. He should be able to trot slowly on hard roads at hound's pace (6 miles an hour) or to go on softer ground at a good swinging pace. The number of horses that can trot well is limited nowadays, which is a great pity. Fortunately there are still a fair number of ponies who will trot 'right out', throwing their legs well forward and covering the ground. The pony on p. 37 has a beautiful swinging trot. If you ever read about Lavengro and how he trotted round the mountain on his Welsh cob, you will long to own a pony who can trot 'right out'. But be very careful to avoid a pony with hackney action *i.e.*, up and down knee-action which only makes a show and does not get over the ground.

The gallop should be smooth and the pony should be able to keep on going. He should be fast but there is no need for him to be a racehorse.



He should be a good jumper and be willing to jump a small fence in cold blood, without any tendency to refuse. If he will do this willingly there is no point in seeing him jump a big obstacle; you can easily train him to do this.

If he is wanted for hunting, he will be more difficult to find and he must be tried with hounds. Most ponies need a great deal of expert riding with hounds before they are willing to go quietly without pulling. Children who are at the beginning of their hunting career should not have in addition the difficulty of breaking in a pony to hounds.

#### HOW TO BUY

To buy a pony is always difficult, because no definite value can be put on him. He may be a perfect animal for one child but quite unsuitable for another. A child with a weak seat must have a quiet mount, a child who dreams of pony hunter-trials and hunting days needs an entirely different animal. Even the most experienced find buying difficult, and the inexperienced would be wise to seek advice. This advice should come preferably from someone who is interested in children's riding and knows something of their difficulties. The Pony Club might be willing to help with advice, and as they know all the ponies in the neighbourhood their help would be invaluable. Or if the child has been having lessons at a nearby riding school the instructress would know his capabilities and would be a useful adviser.

If you decide to go to a dealer, choose a local small dealer, tell him how much you are willing to pay, and stipulate for a month's trial, agreeing to buy the pony at the end of the month or pay for the trial. Here I should like to put in a word for the horse-dealer – very few of them make a fortune, but many fail. It is not until one tries to sell a horse oneself that one sees a different side to this horse-dealing question. How difficult buyers are! They want so much, but they are unwilling to pay for it. Personally I prefer buying from a dealer; a dealer has a wide choice to select from, he will do his best to suit you, and you may be able to arrange with him to exchange your pony if he is not what you want. A private owner may have exaggerated ideas of the value of his possessions, and if you buy from him and do not like your purchase there is no chance of an exchange.

It is a good plan to watch the local papers for advertisements. A pony that has been in the habit of carrying a child is likely to be suitable. Ponies who have been much in harness are not likely to make good riding ponies; their mouths are generally spoilt, they go on their shoulders and are heavy in hand. It is wise to buy locally if possible. Railway carriage is expensive, and if the pony has to be returned as unsuitable the money is wasted. Farmers are often good people to buy from, if their children ride; and many good ponies thoroughly well grounded in their work may be found in livery stables, which make teaching children a part of their business.

## HIRING AN OLD PONY

It is an excellent plan before you try to buy your first pony to hire an old pony for a month or two. This pony can hardly be too quiet. If he is willing to walk freely that is all that is required at first. Try and find an old pony used to children. All that the child needs is to walk about, sitting in the right position and holding his reins properly, and this should have become a habit before a better pony with a little more life in him is purchased. This very quiet pony should not be kept too long, or the child will get the wrong ideas of horse nature and think that all horses are equally stolid.

## A MONTH'S TRIAL

Get a month's trial if you possibly can; you will then be able to see whether the pony suits you. A good vet's opinion will be invaluable. He will tell you if your pony is sound, what his age is, and whether you are being asked a fair price.

When choosing your pony do not be too particular or you will never find the ideal that you have in your mind. Do not on the other hand be too easy-going – do not fall in love with a pony because he has such a beautiful head, or carries his tail so well. The only sound course to follow is to consider what are the essential points and buy no pony that does not fulfil them.

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

# The Rider

*Age to Begin – Good Nerve – Courage – Falls – Treat Your Pony with Tact – Do not Spoil (Ruin)  
Your Pony – Love for Animals*

### AGE TO BEGIN

SOME children begin to ride at five or six and are quite expert by the time they reach nine or ten. This is all to the good if the child is carefully watched so that he does not acquire bad habits. Nine or ten is a more usual age to begin; the child then makes steady progress, he does not need so much watching and will be less dependent on grown-up aid; his body is light and well proportioned to his muscles, and he therefore finds it easy to obtain balance. Children of thirteen or fourteen often seem too heavy for their muscles and this handicaps them.

### GOOD NERVE

It is not uncommon to see a very tiny child starting on his riding career full of confidence, and this must be maintained at all costs. A tiny niece used to say, 'Nothing can hurt me when I am on Comma's back'. This is the ideal attitude. A child who feels like this will make rapid progress in his riding. Fortunately most children are not nervous, and consequently they have no difficulty in making progress with their riding. But this blissful state can easily be destroyed by a fall or a series of falls; or by a pony which is 'too much' for his rider. And once destroyed no power on earth can restore it. We cannot therefore take too much care to preserve nerve.

There are still people who seem to think that a fall will do a child no harm. I suppose they recollect the old saying, 'It takes seven' – or was it seventy? – 'falls to make a rider'. 'Nerve' is a funny thing, and a most precious possession; those who have it are indeed blessed. They 'see no danger', and because they do not see it they are in a far safer position than those whose nerve is not so good and who 'see danger' at every turn; and their rides are far more enjoyable.

Now any fall may destroy this blessed state; a bad fall will most probably do so; a succession of bad falls must destroy the best nerve in the world; therefore falls should be carefully avoided. The avoidance of falls depends almost entirely on the tact of the instructor and his knowledge of suitable mounts. Every child naturally does his best to avoid them; they are not the result of carelessness or inattention, but simply the result of lack of muscle. No unnecessary risks should



be run, for if a child loses his nerve his riding career will most probably be ended. A good instructor feels responsible for any falls his pupils may have. If a child has two or three consecutive falls there is definitely something wrong and it should be put right before it is too late.

If a child is nervous and disinclined to ride, it is far better to put off his riding education and try later. A nervous child makes little progress; he may take a dislike to riding, and his nervousness is in itself likely to cause an accident, as it affects the pony and makes him nervous too.

Children are often scared out of riding by a pony who is 'too much' for them. There are ponies to suit every type of rider, ranging from the very quiet and confidential right up to the dashing and brilliant which only the most gifted horseman can cope with. It is all-important to get a pony who suits the rider personally: 'one man's meat is another man's poison.'

Children never say they are frightened: it is a point of honour with them not to do so; but a glance at their faces will tell the truth – the expression of tenseness and strain should warn one that, quiet though the pony may appear to be, he is at present too great a strain on the rider's nerve. He should be changed for a quieter one however great the nuisance may be, and an immediate improvement in the child's riding will probably be seen. There is no need whatever for the beginner to have falls. I once taught five children to ride; none of them had any accidents though they were riding with me for a year and were all riding four-year-olds. Nobody should take any credit to themselves for good nerves; it is a gift of the gods and largely dependent on good health.

#### COURAGE

Sometimes an older rider feels nervous but is at the same time very anxious to ride. She should be sure that her mount is very quiet and should go out with someone in whom she has confidence. As her seat gets firmer and she gets to understand how to manage her mount, her bad nerve will vanish, for riding will improve her health and her nerve with it. To pursue this course needs courage. The game is well worth the candle.

Remember:

*No game was ever worth a rap  
For a rational man to play  
Into which no danger, no mishap,  
Could possibly find its way!*

#### FALLS

When children get on with their riding and are past the first difficulties a fall will do them no harm whatever. It is all in the day's work, and if they ride much,

especially if they try their hand at riding young or half-broken ponies, they will have plenty of falls, most of them quite harmless. After a bit they will learn how to fall, which is easy enough. It depends on keeping a tight hold on the reins in your left hand. Some people do this instinctively. The tension of the rein will usually prevent you from landing on your head or on your spine – both unpleasant – and you will in all probability meet the ground with the back of your left shoulder-blade, which is well able to take the shock. Moreover you will get up with the reins in your hand, holding your pony firmly, instead of seeing him galloping off leaving you to run after him.

There are two sorts of falls. One is a 'voluntary' *i.e.*, it could have been avoided if your seat had been stronger. For example you part company with your pony when he shies or bucks; or sometimes when jumping. The second is unavoidable, *e.g.* when your pony falls at a fence or slips up on a slippery road.

It is quite possible to go through life riding quietly and to have no falls at all of either sort.

#### TREAT YOUR PONY WITH TACT

It is an excellent thing for both pony and rider that the child should start by making friends with the pony, and be able to catch him, take him into a stable or shed, tie him up, brush him with a dandy brush and lead him out for a walk before he thinks of mounting him. The two will thus make friends, and mounting will follow as a matter of course.

The grass-kept pony looked after by his owner teaches much more than the stabled pony looked after by a groom. All animals need a great deal of study if we are to understand them. We must find out what they like and what they dislike. Some children have a natural gift for this; others never learn, but seem to expect the pony to do all the understanding.

Some children think only of their own point of view; but the pony has a point of view too, and you must give it due consideration. You have your rights and he has his. Remember that what is play to you may not be play to him.

Be careful that your pony is never teased; it is unfair. If he retaliates he is nearly always the one to be blamed and that is unjust. And it is easy to make him vicious. Three little boys were once seen throwing pebbles through the open door of a stable to see how high they could make the horses inside kick; they could not have employed a likelier method of making them vicious.

Some ponies like being patted and petted, some do not. Some like to be stroked on their necks, some like to have their foreheads rubbed, and some just want to be left alone. Many children hate being kissed by all their relations and friends; a pony has his likes and dislikes about this sort of thing too; try and find out what they are.

Ponies are not meant to be played with; they are much too important. It is true that some ponies – especially mares that have been brought up with child-

ren – understand them well and are extraordinarily patient with them. But it must not be expected that all ponies are the same.

It will take you a little time before you understand what it is fair to ask your pony to do and what is unfair. A pony will be very willing to take you for a two-hour ride over the fields and through the woods every day, but he does not care about being trotted up and down the same field for an hour together by children ‘taking their turns’. He will soon be thinking out a way of putting an end to his boredom. If you ask too much of him you drive him into revolt.

Similarly when you are learning to jump. He will get bored with this long before you do, and you must think out ways of making jumping pleasant to him – tit-bits, the company of his friends, and so on. If you are tactful and understand him, you will take care to avoid asking him repeatedly to do things which he very much dislikes so that eventually he rebels and becomes disobedient. But this does not mean that you are to give in to him.

#### DO NOT SPOIL (RUIN) YOUR PONY

The child needs strength of will to deal effectually with his pony, and he must not let the pony have his own way.

The pony, say, refuses to go in a certain direction and tries to go home. The rider, instead of there and then making up his mind that at all costs somehow or other the pony shall go where he is asked, makes one or two half-hearted efforts and then gives in, so that the pony gets his own way. With experience of an easy victory, the next contest is easier for him. He soon finds that he has only got to threaten a little, say by getting up on his hindlegs, and the rider will at once give in. All he was guilty of at first was a mild attempt to get his own way, but now with every succeeding victory he becomes more difficult, and an accomplished horseman is needed to deal with him. He is ‘spoilt’, and original weakness on the part of the rider was the cause.

Some people consider that spoiling is akin to kindness, but it is far closer akin to cruelty. It is a poor sort of love which spoils a child, a pony or a dog.

A pony who has acquired bad tricks owing to ignorant or weak riders is hard to cure, and it is unlikely that he will ever be suitable for beginners again. He therefore loses caste and rapidly goes downhill, instead of keeping a comfortable home which he might have held to the end of his days. His soft-hearted but weak master or mistress has proved but a poor friend to him.

#### LOVE FOR ANIMALS

Love for animals does not consist in talk. Indeed those who speak ‘words without wisdom’ about animals often do a great deal more harm than good. There seems to be too much talk and too little common sense.



You must understand a great deal about animals before you can help them. Recently in the daily paper there have been letters on the subject of the destruction, at the age of twenty-five, of a well-known and distinguished horse. Many people wrote to suggest that he should be turned out to grass 'to end his days in peace as he so well deserved'. One often meets people with soft hearts but no knowledge, who talk in this way. A vet. wrote, however, to say that any old horse who had been used to the comfort of a stable would suffer considerably if turned out in the winter. If the horse was to be kept alive he should have the comfort of a stable, good food and sufficient exercise. He was perfectly right.

If you love your pony you must look after him properly and ride him well. That is true kindness and it will make a vast difference to his happiness. But if you put on your pony's bridle so that he is uncomfortable; or feed him at irregular times so that his digestion is upset; or put bad hay in front of him because you have not learnt the difference between good hay and bad hay; or leave his shoes on so long without a remove that they cramp his feet and he cannot help stumbling, all these things are unkind and the pony's unhappy expression will reveal the shortcomings of the owner.

You are in the position of Providence to your pony, and it is up to you to give him a fair deal and a happy life. We are told in the Bible that man has been given dominion over the beasts of the field. We are therefore responsible for those we rule over. We are also told that not a sparrow falls to the ground without the heavenly Father's knowledge. These two texts need pondering over.

## Saddle and Bridle

*Buy the Best – Felt Saddles – Safety-bars and Safety-stirrups – Cruppers – Girths – The Bridle – The Snaffle – The Pelham – The Double Bridle – The Martingale – Cleaning and Preserving Leather – Cleaning Girths, Steel, and Nickel – Care in Saddling and Bridling – A Few Stories with Morals*

### BUY THE BEST

THE saddle and bridle cannot be too good. This is an instance of the best being the cheapest in the end. They must be also well fitted and well cared for. Owing to the fact that the child's 'tack' is often left to the care of the amateur, it is frequently neglected. Somebody must be responsible for seeing that the pony is properly saddled and bridled, and saddlery kept in good repair. A sensible child can do it, once he is properly instructed. An immense number of accidents occur because ponies are badly saddled or badly bridled. Such accidents may be disastrous either to the child or to the pony. Nor is it always realized that though no visible harm may be done, yet serious damage may be done to the pony's nerves. Nothing upsets a young pony more than to have his rider fall off; he cannot imagine what has happened, and is probably terrified, and when next the rider gets on he is on the look-out for this unexpected thing to happen again, and consequently he is nervous.

I knew one pony whose nerve was completely ruined because his owners never took the trouble to see that he was turned out properly – every time he went out the saddle slipped or the girths burst, or a leather gave way, the rider was flung off and the pony scared out of his wits. With each accident he grew more nervous and terrified, and at last was declared unsuitable for anything but harness, in which he went very quietly, simply because he had never had any accidents when being driven.

Another nice pony was ruined by carelessness in fitting his bridle. A big awkward double bridle was put in his mouth, the pony was uncomfortable, his mouth hurt him, he could not understand what his rider wanted, and he became worse and worse. After two or three similar experiences he got completely out of control. The last I heard of him was that he was for sale, very cheap.

These sort of things do not happen in a good stable, but are common enough among people who do not realize the all-important part which saddle and bridle play.

Ponies' saddles are more difficult to fit than horses', because ponies are usually round in the ribs and are inclined to be low in the withers. The saddle needs

special stuffing to fit each pony. It should not slip backwards or forwards or sideways.

#### FELT SADDLES

The difficulties of fitting may be avoided by buying a felt saddle; they cannot be recommended too strongly for children. Buy the best type you can, with a tree in front but none behind. Such a saddle will fit all sorts and shapes of pony. Very small children who do not spend many hours in the saddle may find a felt saddle without a tree is satisfactory, but for heavier riders this type may injure a pony's withers. Children like felt saddles better than leather ones because they are less slippery. Have it made with 'D's', two in front to take a breastplate or mackintosh, and one behind to take a crupper. This saddle is about half the price of a leather one, but its life is shorter. Beware of moth with felt saddles.

#### SAFETY-BARS AND SAFETY-STIRRUPS

All saddles must have a reliable safety-bar or safety arrangement of some sort. The safety-bar is on the saddle and the stirrup-leather is slipped over it. If the rider has a fall, the leather slips right off. Whatever pattern you use, satisfy yourself that it really works. One of the worst accidents that can happen is for a rider to fall and get dragged by his pony. This should be absolutely impossible.

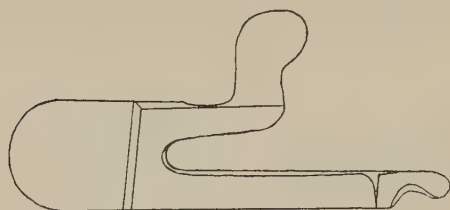


FIG. IV. SAFETY BAR,  
WITH CATCH DOWN

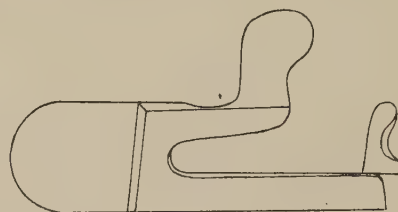


FIG. V. SAFETY BAR,  
WITH CATCH UP

*The catch should only be left up very occasionally. For instance, when you are carrying your saddle a long way and you want to be quite sure that the leather cannot slip off.*

The illustrations show an excellent type of safety-bar. But be sure you always ride with the catch down and not up. It should be always down when you are mounted, as in Fig. IV. It will then slip off easily if the rider is thrown – he cannot be dragged. People who do not know frequently shut this catch, because they think that the stirrup-leathers are likely to slip off and get lost. They thus prepare a trap for the rider.

Another point about safety is that stirrup-irons should neither be so large that the child's foot goes right through, nor so small that the foot can get wedged.



## CRUPPERS

The right place for the saddle is in the middle of the pony's back, and not forward on his withers. If you cannot keep the saddle in the middle of the back you should use a crupper (Fig. VI). One often sees a child perched, not on the pony's back, but on his withers. In this position both rider and pony are thoroughly uncomfortable, the rider cannot ride properly, and the pony with so much weight on his forehead is out of balance and will probably pull; if the rider is heavy the pony's forelegs will be prematurely worn out or he may fall.

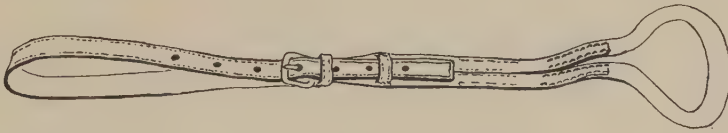


FIG. VI. A CRUPPER

*This is very useful for grass-kept ponies until they get into condition. It helps to prevent the saddle slipping forward. It is wise, when buying a saddle, to have it fitted with a D at the back, to which a crupper can be attached if necessary.*

The saddle slips forward for three reasons. First, a pony in grass-fed condition has a big belly which forces the girths, and with them the saddle, forward. Second, many ponies have thick low withers which do not keep the saddle back; a horse's withers are both thinner and higher. Third, until they are in hard condition, which they seldom are, ponies have no saddle-muscle. This is a little muscle which develops with work in front of the rider's knee and helps to keep the saddle back.

If the saddle has a 'D' fastened to it behind, it is easy to fix a crupper, which will help to keep the saddle in the right place. All Army horses used to wear these until comparatively recent times.

When you want to put the crupper on, it is detached from the saddle and the tail is slipped through the loop. The end of the crupper is then pushed through the 'D' at the back of the saddle and fastened. It must be loose enough to allow the hand to be turned over underneath it when the saddle is in the right place.

Cruppers are especially needed in hilly countries. The rider may find himself in an awkward position if he goes hunting in a hilly country on a slipping saddle. A small boy hunting on Exmoor felt his saddle slipping forward until he was right on his pony's neck; hounds were running and the pony was very excited, scrambling down a steep path. The rider was unable to pull him up, and feeling his position quite desperate the boy scrambled off on to the bank; the pony followed the hounds, no one could catch him, and the boy had six miles to trudge home on foot.

Many people think that if a pony needs a crupper it shows that he has bad shoulders. They will tell you that a well-made pony should not need a crupper. But ponies have far more efficient shoulders than have most horses, and it is almost true to say that the Moorland pony never falls. When a pony loses his big belly and develops his saddle muscle, it will probably be unnecessary to wear one. Children who go to school and come back to grass-kept ponies a week or two before Christmas, have difficulties to contend with that many grown-ups with their stabled horses do not understand.

### GIRTHS

Use girths with two buckles and be sure that they are in good repair. The pony's comfort and the rider's – they are identical – depend largely on careful girthing. Girth your pony up by degrees, first from one side and then from the other. Do not girth him up all at once or too tightly, as this causes him great discomfort. There should always be room for two fingers to slip under the girths. Many horses have a trick of swinging round their heads and nipping at one as a warning to be more considerate about girthing. After your grass-kept pony has been out a few minutes he will need the girths tightened again, and this can be done from the saddle. Grey or yellow webbing girths are serviceable. Leather girths split for ventilation are excellent. They must be kept supple with neat's-foot oil.

There is a tendency nowadays to girth horses up too tightly, which must be extremely uncomfortable. Some years back all horses hunting in hilly countries wore breastplates. These prevented the saddle slipping back, and saddles were then less tightly girthed. They looked very much like martingales, and it is a great pity that they are so seldom seen nowadays.

### THE BRIDLE

There are three kinds of bridle – the snaffle, the double bridle, and the Pelham, which is a cross between the snaffle and the double bridle, or rather a combination of the two.

### THE SNAFFLE

If you look at p. 147 you will see a pony with a snaffle. The names of the leather-parts of this bridle are (a) the noseband, round his nose; the object of this is to prevent him opening his mouth so wide that the bit can be displaced. (b) The throat-lash, under his throat. This must be fairly loose, but not too loose, as its object is to prevent the bridle being pulled right over the pony's head. (c) The forehead-band, across his forehead. (d) The cheek-pieces running right down along the cheeks and supporting the snaffle.

This is the best sort of bit you can have for your pony. It is simple and easy to understand both for the pony and for his rider. Every beginner's pony should be snaffle-mouthed. The snaffle should be jointed, and have a thick mouthpiece, because that is more comfortable than a thin one, and it should have big rings (p. 130). These big rings are a great help in turning, as they bring a broad bearing on the pony's cheek. Horses like snaffles, because they are easy to understand. They do not hurt them, and they therefore obey them readily.

Be careful to avoid buying a snaffle with a thin mouthpiece and small rings.

Place your snaffle high up in the pony's mouth; but not so high that it wrinkles the corners of the mouth. The snaffle should be about an inch longer than would be necessary if it were to fit the mouth exactly, so that there will be a little play from side to side.

A noseband, if it is properly adjusted, is a great help in control. There should be room for two fingers between nose and noseband. Have it tight enough to prevent the pony opening his mouth wide, or he will be able to evade the control of the snaffle. Or with too loose a noseband, if the rings of the snaffle are too small, they may slip right through the mouth, and that will hurt and annoy him.

The noseband should be fitted fairly low, about one inch below the cheekbones. Nosebands are frequently fitted either too high or too loose; they are then useless. The noseband may consist simply of a strap which slips through loops on the head-piece, or it may have a separate head-piece of its own.

The bridle can have two reins or one, but one is the simpler for the beginner.

If your pony pulls, try and cure him by teaching him to back correctly, which will make him understand what the bit is for and will also make him carry himself better. The cause of pulling usually lies in low head-carriage; if we can raise our pony's head and make him carry himself properly, we can generally control him. A snaffle has a tendency to raise the head. If a smooth snaffle does not seem strong enough to stop the pony, and you cannot get him more obedient by teaching him the exercises in Chapter V., try a twisted snaffle; this also should be jointed. It is often necessary to use a martingale with a snaffle.

I am a firm believer in the snaffle for a child's use for the following reasons.

It is easy to buy and fit. It is easy to put on. Its action is easy for the pony to understand, and easy for the rider to understand. It prompts the pony to hold his head in the right position – well up. It will save a great deal of worry if you can buy a pony that is snaffle-mouthed, one that has always been ridden in, and is easily controlled by, a snaffle.

Once you change your snaffle for a double bridle your pony will never have the same sensitive mouth. The mouth very soon hardens up. Moreover his head-carriage will very often be changed for the worse, and if that happens he may become more and more unmanageable.

Snaffles are at present unpopular in England. But fashions come and go; in



Ireland and in Italy they are much in favour. Racehorses nowadays invariably wear snaffles, although at one time every racehorse wore a double bridle.

Snaffles must always be used when practising jumping. It is often said that few horses have mouths good enough for snaffle bridles; but this is a matter of careful breaking. Horses with good head-carriage who have been properly broken should retain their naturally tender mouths and go well in a snaffle.

Children who use a snaffle bridle need not read the next section, which is a difficult one.

It is quite certain that no one can put on a double bridle or a Pelham correctly without a great deal of knowledge and care.

### THE PELHAM

If you feel certain that the pony wants more control than a snaffle gives, a Pelham may be tried. This is a combination of snaffle and double bridle. It has only one mouthpiece, like a snaffle, but it has cheeks like a double bridle and a curb-chain, and it has two reins, the snaffle-rein and the curb-rein.

Because the Pelham has one mouthpiece it is more suitable for the small mouth of a pony than the double bridle which has two mouthpieces.

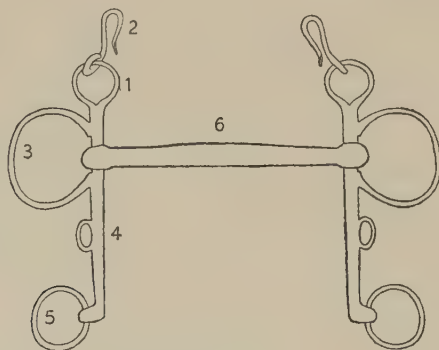


FIG. VII. HALF-MOON PELHAM

*A good bit for ponies that cannot be persuaded to go well in a snaffle.*

1. Top eye for attaching head-stall.
2. Hook for attaching curb-chain.
3. Ring for snaffle rein.
4. Cheek.
5. Ring for curb-rein.
6. Mouthpiece.

The main problem in biting is to find a bit which prompts your pony to carry his head in the right position. Both the Pelham and the double bridle have a ten-

dency to make a pony carry his head too low. They should therefore never be used for a pony whose head-carriage is already low; they will make him worse. One often sees ponies whose carriage has been ruined by the careless use of a Pelham or a double bridle. You will see photos of such ponies in the *Young Rider's Picture Book*. Sometimes their heads are too low, sometimes their noses are brought too near to their chests.

The action of these bits is not directly on the mouth like the snaffle's; it is a lever action. If the lever is not properly adjusted the bit does not work correctly. When properly adjusted the pressure of the bit comes on the inside of the mouth only. But when it is wrongly adjusted the pressure comes outside the mouth under the chin, and this will make the pony pull.

If you decide to use a Pelham, you must understand how to fit it correctly or it will be no good to you. Possibly you will be able to get a knowledgeable grown-up to fit it for you, and then you can put it on without altering the fitting. But few grown-ups have the necessary knowledge.

One often sees a pony fitted with a Pelham which is too large. The mouthpiece should fit the mouth exactly. If it does not, it will slip from one side to the other, and the curb-chain will work unevenly. This will make a sore on the chin-groove and make the pony pull. There are many bad Pelhams on the market, warranted to spoil any pony's mouth. Bit-making is an expert's business and you cannot be too careful in buying your bits. It is much more difficult to get a pony properly bitted than a horse. It is very difficult to get the correct size.

The Pelham should be fitted just below the corners of the mouth, and the curb-chain must lie in the chin-groove without any tendency to work up. It will work up if the Pelham is fitted too high, and will make a sore on the sharp bones of the lower jaw.



FIG. VIII. THE CURB-CHAIN

To put on a curb-chain correctly needs practice. When the Pelham is not being used the chain is usually left hanging on its off side. Stand on the near side of your pony and untwist it in an anti-clockwise direction as far as it will go. Then hook it on the near side. It should lie absolutely flat (like a ribbon or a bit of leather) without a twist or a half-twist anywhere. If there is a twist it will have

the effect of pinching the pony's lip and making him pull. If you find that there always seems a half-twist, try 'hooking it backside before'.

After you have done your best to put on your Pelham correctly, you must test its action and see whether it is working properly. Stand by the side of your pony, catch hold of all four reins under his chin, and pull them gently, much as you would when mounted. If the bit is acting correctly the pony will bend his neck and 'come back' to you. He will follow the pull of the reins; just as you would wish him to do when you pull the reins when mounted. If he 'comes back to you' it is a proof that the pressure of the bit comes on the right place – on the bars inside the mouth. The pressure should be there and nowhere else.

The bars are the part of the lower jaw which is free from teeth, on which the bit rests. If the jaw had teeth all the way up, we should be unable to control our horses with a bit, and would have to think out some other means of control.

If the bit is acting wrongly, instead of 'coming back to you' your pony will do the opposite and poke his nose out, straightening his neck instead of bending it and probably wrinkling up his lip and making a face at the same time. This is the opposite of what you want; obviously the bit is not working correctly and, when you are on and pull the reins he will only poke his nose out in the same way and go faster and faster and pull harder and harder.

If he 'pokes' it shows that the pressure of the bit is not coming on the bars where it should be, but is on the wrong place, probably on the chin-groove. Pressure there will naturally have the effect of urging him onwards – just as a man who had a blow behind his head would be inclined to run forward, whereas if he had a blow on his nose he would be inclined to go backwards.

The cause of poking is usually one of the following:

(1) If the curb-chain has a twist in it, it will hurt either his lower lip or the chin-groove. There should be no discomfort under the chin whatever.

(2) If the chain is too tight it will act much like an over-tight bandage; it will first hurt a good deal when the rider pulls the reins and then make the jaw go dead. If it is too loose it will lie, not in the chin-groove, but below it, and the bit will be useless and irritating. One link tighter or one link looser may make all the difference.

(3) If the bit is too long in the mouthpiece it will work either to the right or to the left and the bearing of the curb-chain will consequently be uneven and painful.

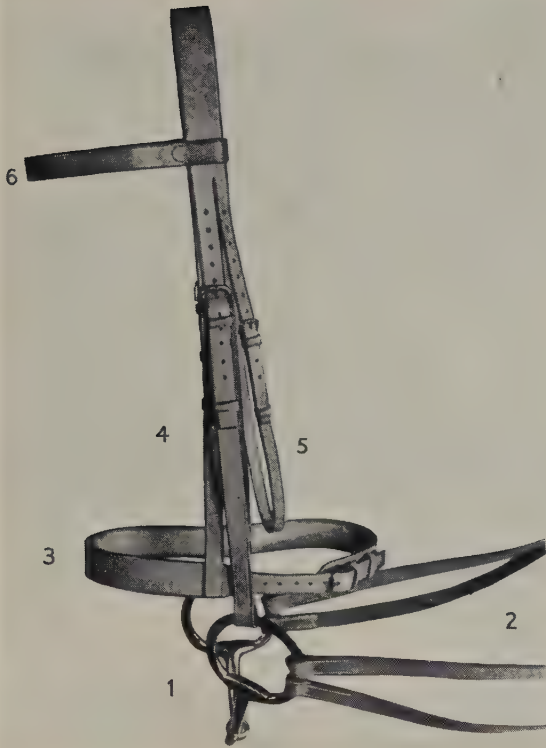
(4) If the bit has been placed a trifle too high it will drag the curb-chain up after it, and the sharp edges of the lower jaw will get pinched. If it is a trifle too low, the curb-chain will hang below the chin-groove and will not work correctly. One hole up or down in the cheek-piece will make all the difference.

If a child can fit a Pelham or a double bridle properly at the age of fourteen, he is well on in his knowledge of stable-management.



## A SNAFFLE BRIDLE

*A snaffle bridle with double reins.*  
1. Mouthpiece; 2. Reins; 3. Nose-band; 4. Cheeks; 5. Throat-lash; 6. Forehead band.



### THE SNAFFLE BRIDLE PROPERLY PUT ON

*This pony has a snaffle and a standing martingale; both are perfectly put on. The rider has a racing seat, with knees level with his pony's back; this seat is only suitable for riding races.*





#### THE PONY CLUB

*The Pony Club was started by retired cavalry officers in 1929. Its object was to hand on to civilians the high degree of training which had only until then been accessible to the cavalry. The help of Masters of Hounds all over the country was secured and many hunting people and others gave generous voluntary help, and children for a low annual subscription received skilled help with their riding.*

*The photographs show members who have distinguished themselves in horsemanship. Children join at an early age and gradually work their way up. Those who obtain their A Certificate are to be congratulated. They will be able to train their own ponies.*



## THE DOUBLE BRIDLE

The double bridle is not a suitable bit for ponies because their mouths are too small to hold two mouthpieces. It consists of two parts; a curb-bit with its curb-chain, which looks much like a Pelham, and a bridoon which is like a thin snaffle.

In England it is used almost exclusively by grown-ups in the hunting field, where in a crowded country horses have to be well under control. In Ireland where there is more room to ride and banks are very high and ditches very wide and deep, the snaffle is the favourite, and the horses look much happier and go much more freely, and the percentage of good jumpers is much higher.

Bitting is very much a matter of fashion, and fashions come and go. Double bridles are today a great deal 'lighter' than they used to be. That great horse-master 'Mac' of the Randolph Stables at Oxford, who mounted many generations of Oxford undergraduates, never allowed them to use double bridles, and this in spite of the fact that a large number of his horses were old steeplechasers and great pullers. His opinion was justified by results, for these horses had a great reputation. They could all gallop, they could all jump, and they never refused. Whether they would have put up such magnificent performances over the huge obstacles of the Oxford drag in double bridles is doubtful. Mac's opinion was that double bridles would spoil their galloping and spoil their jumping.

The bridoon should be fitted below the corners of the mouth and just above the bit. Bridles are frequently placed so high that the short mouth of the horse is pulled back and becomes a long slit-up mouth. This slit-up mouth becomes a permanent deformity and a disgrace to the owner.

The fitting of the bit follows the same lines as that of the Pelham.

## THE MARTINGALE

Grass-fed ponies, whose tendency is to carry their heads too low and not too high, should seldom need a martingale.

A martingale is very useful for a pony who is ridden in a snaffle if he has a habit of throwing his head up when he wants to evade the action of the snaffle. The best sort is the standing martingale which is attached under the noseband, and runs back to the girths (see p. 147). It should be so fixed that the pony's muzzle can be raised high enough to be level with his withers. You can test this by standing in front of him, putting both hands under his chin and raising his head.

Martingales should very seldom be necessary for ponies who have Pelhams or double bridles. Perhaps one pony in fifty needs them. They have been very popular of late years, but many people think that a martingale destroys light hands.



If your horse throws his head up you should take it as a sign, not that he needs a martingale, but that your hands are heavy on his mouth and that he is consequently uncomfortable. If you take the hint, as I have often done, and yield the reins slightly, he will drop his nose. Old-fashioned people used to say 'my hands are my martingale', and they were right.

#### CLEANING AND PRESERVING LEATHER

Having secured for your pony a good saddle and bridle you must consider the subject of keeping your 'tack' in the best possible condition, for the best saddlery may be completely ruined by a week's neglect. Leather which has been out in a shower loses its oil, and if not 'dressed' will crack and become brittle and useless.

Be sure to keep your leather supple. After work, rub it over with a damp rag to clean it, and then dress it with saddle-soap; or, if it is hard, with castor oil or neat's-foot oil to keep it supple. Stiff and cracked leather is a disgrace to the horseman, it is uncomfortable to horse and rider, and it is unsafe.

#### CLEANING GIRTHS, STEEL, AND NICKEL

Scrub webbing-girths with soap and water, and hang them up to take out the kinks. If you do not enjoy cleaning saddlery be careful to avoid steel bits or stirrup-irons. Steel must immediately on return from a ride be washed, dried and polished, or it becomes hopelessly rusty; many people on return from a ride remove the bit and irons and drop them straight into a bucket of water until they can be attended to. Rustless steel is far easier to deal with; washing and an occasional polish will keep it in good condition. Nickel is much cheaper and is usually satisfactory, and very easy to clean.

Felt saddles need a good brushing to remove sweat and loose hairs, and the leather part kept supple. Leather saddles must be cleaned like the bridle and dressed with saddle-soap.

If buckles get stiff and difficult to move, a drop of paraffin will loosen them.

#### CARE IN SADDLING AND BRIDLING

We cannot afford to be ignorant of the rules for correct saddling and bitting. It is not easy to saddle or bridle a pony well; one can judge by the way a pony is turned out the quality of the stable he comes from.

Every horseman must take the trouble to learn how the saddle and bridle should be put on. He will save himself a world of trouble and get a great deal more out of his riding. There seems to be an idea among some people that it really does not matter what sort of pony the child has, or where the saddle is put

on its back, or what sort of bridle is put in its mouth. But carelessness of this sort is a frequent cause of bad accidents and ruined ponies. Here are three very common faults. The snaffle or bridoon placed so high that the corners of the pony's mouth are stretched back. The curb-chain laid with a half-twist instead of flat. The saddle perched on the pony's withers instead of being on his back.

#### A FEW STORIES WITH MORALS

These stories show what serious results sometimes follow from careless saddling and bridling.

A girl who could ride quite nicely was lent a pony. She saddled it herself and started off. The pony had been carefully broken and had no tricks of any sort. But after she had been riding for a short time, he suddenly began to buck, and bucked to such effect that at his fourth effort she rolled off into the heather. She tried to remount, but he showed unmistakable signs of starting his Wild West performance over again. On investigation it was found that the hard leather flap of the felt saddle had been wrongly put on and was running into him. This pony was ten years old, and had never bucked before, but since then he has always shown a tendency to buck with an indifferent rider.

A boy of fourteen went out with the Staghounds on a delightful pony, whose only fault was that he was a little slow. The boy, however, was a real sportsman, and, by careful riding and an extensive knowledge of the country, he was able to see as much of the hounds as anybody. One day, he failed to saddle his pony as well as he usually did – he had no crupper – and I was startled to see a pony with an incredibly long back showing behind the saddle. The hounds ran a great distance, and this pony tired. If he had been asked, he would have told us that he was very tired in front, and that if only he had been allowed to carry his saddle on his back, and do half the work with his hindlegs, he could have got along very much quicker and would not have got tired at all.

Old horses are remarkably long-suffering, but those who have to do with young horses soon learn that right biting is essential. The next two stories illustrate trouble arising from errors in biting.

A beautiful young pony, just broken and with a very light snaffle mouth, was sent out in a curb-bridle for the first time with a strange rider. The bit hurt him and he started rearing as he left the farmyard. At the first corner he stopped dead, and when he was asked to proceed he got up a little higher. At every corner the same thing happened, and eventually he defeated his rider and was brought home. If this sort of thing is repeated two or three times, a pony is probably ruined for life.

A keen grass-fed pony in a snaffle was sent out hunting with a tough young man. I heard him remark, 'The pony is all right if you let him go'. Quite so! But there are few places in this country where you can 'let him go' without trouble following. At the end of the day, the pony, a five-year-old, was brought home with his knees cut. He pulled hard, the rider let him go, and the two of them dashed into a low stone wall.

A perfect child's snaffle-mouthed pony was reported to have begun pulling a little. The reason was that he had been carelessly bridled; the noseband had been placed so high that it not only failed to give any control, but it also rubbed him below his cheekbones and under his jawbones. If this had been altered and the pony given some backing exercises, he would probably have regained his former excellent mouth. Instead, he was put into a double bridle, which at first drove him nearly crazy, but he soon learnt that if he got his head down he could bear against the bit and deaden his mouth. The child had not sufficient experience to understand this; and the pony now 'bores' badly, with his head down by his knees. He is no longer a pleasant or a very safe mount.

Ponies who have been carelessly looked after often show small swellings or sores on their heads. Such things are a disgrace to the horseman; they are the result of ill-fitting bridles or halters and the cause must be carefully searched for. Such places are likely to be found at the corners of the lips from harsh use of the snaffle; under the chin from an ill-fitting curb-chain; under the jawbone from an ill-fitting noseband or head-collar.



## Shoeing

IF the pony has good feet and is used for slow work on soft ground, only going out two or three times a week, he will probably do his work satisfactorily without shoes. The feet get worn down sufficiently but not too much, and there is no danger of foot trouble owing to bad shoeing. Sometimes the blacksmith may be required to trim a hoof that is growing out of shape, but most ponies have excellent feet and no attention at all may be necessary.

If you decide that shoeing is a necessity, it may be sufficient to have your pony shod in front only; the greater part of the wear comes on the fore-shoes. Your shoeing bill and the long wait at the blacksmith's will thus be reduced, and you will also avoid the risks of kicking from a pony shod behind. Ponies cannot be put out at grass together when shod, without some risk. With some you can be practically certain no kicking will occur, but one has to remember that an iron-shod hoof can break a leg, and if a horse kicks at others it may be necessary to separate them.

A pony doing hard work must, of course, be shod all round.

Once shod, attention must be paid to the feet each month by the blacksmith. He will either trim the feet and replace the shoe, or if the shoes are worn out provide another set. This 'removing' is necessary each month, not necessarily because the shoe is worn out, but because the foot has grown and the shoe no longer fits. Neglect will lead to foot trouble, often very difficult to cure.

Shoeing is a highly skilled job, and trouble must be taken to go to the best blacksmith within reach. It is the owner's business to teach the pony to hold up his feet and stand quietly before he goes to the blacksmith. If the pony is troublesome the blacksmith must be paid extra for the extra time that the shoeing will take. Otherwise one can hardly be surprised if he gets impatient and may upset the pony and make him difficult to shoe, which is a bad fault.

Time is well spent at the forge; the blacksmith is usually an interesting, knowledgeable man, and he will take more trouble with your pony if he knows you value him.

## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

# Riding Clothes

*Hats – Coats, Breeches and Gaiters, and Jodhpurs – Gloves – Hunting-crop – Spurs*

CLOTHES must be neat, workmanlike, and inconspicuous. They must also be comfortable; nothing must pinch, or flop about, for if it does the rider's attention is distracted from his pony.

There is a tendency now to dress anyhow. But those who are not carefully dressed do not give the impression that they are capable of looking after a valuable pony – or indeed any pony. I have never known any of these oddly dressed folk to be first-class riders. The good horseman is invariably suitably dressed, there is something about him, even if his coat is threadbare, that bears witness to the fact that he is accustomed to the society of that great gentleman, the horse. There is no room for eccentricity in riding clothes, for there is a reason for every detail of the horseman's attire.

Children grow so fast that it is a waste of money to fit them out with expensive coats, boots, and so on, which will be useless in a year's time. Grown-ups should buy the very best, for this is true economy and their things will last for years; but for children the main thing is to try to select things which can be worn on foot as well as riding, and so do double service.

There are some children who give no thought to their clothes; they must remember that it is their duty to themselves as well as to other people to turn themselves out decently. This is especially important for those who go hunting. On the other hand there are some who care far too much about clothes and forget their manners which are infinitely more important. Good manners come from good hearts and of them we can never have too many. When I was once out hunting I was riding behind three boys. In front was a boy very badly dressed, wrong in every particular; behind him were two boys of the same age, well dressed and well mounted, who were obviously picking the other to pieces, item by item. Such ill-mannered snobs do a great deal of harm to hunting; unfortunately there are few hunting fields which are entirely free from them.

## HATS

Care must be taken about the hat; it must fit well and not flap about or come down over the eyes. This is very trying for the rider, and sure to happen at the most difficult moment when he wants all his wits. A well-fitting soft felt hat is comfortable, but if you go hunting you are safer in a bowler, which may protect

the head from a blow from an overhanging branch or break the severity of a fall on the head. The bowler should have a cord which attaches it to the coat collar, otherwise a lost hat may mean a lost run.

Small children look well in velvet hunting-caps with a hard safety-lining. Older children must not wear these hats if they hunt, because custom for generations has decreed that the velvet cap is to be worn only by the Master and the Hunt Officials.

#### COATS, BREECHES AND GAITERS, AND JODHPURS

Children can be suitably dressed in coats, breeches, gaiters and lace boots. Clothes like these can do double service and can be very useful in the country. Jodhpurs and boots are very popular (p 148).

For hunting, coats and breeches must be stout enough to resist a heavy shower, and be made of material that can put up a good resistance to brambles, gorse, snags, and so on. Breeches must fit really well. They must be made long enough below the knee or they will work up; if they have this fault they can have 'continuations' added. Gaiters also need careful buying, and fitting. They can be made of leather for hard wear, or of cloth or canvas.

Go to a sporting tailor; he alone knows what is wanted. A good country tailor living in a hunting district often understands country clothes better than a London tailor, who has a tendency to turn one out more suited to the Row than the hunting-field.

Children who ride should be careful to select every coat and overcoat with a view to its possible adaption for riding in its old age. With this object in view it must be of suitable material and split up behind so as to sit well over the pony's back.

#### GLOVES

Dogskin gloves are very hard-wearing. They should be the best of their kind. String gloves are needed for the cold weather, and they are also most useful in rainy weather, as they prevent the reins slipping.

#### HUNTING-CROP

The hunting-crop, which is best made of ash, should be small enough to balance easily in the hand, but strong enough to push a gate open or hold it back without bending. It is very seldom used for hitting a horse. It should have a leather thong with lash attached, which is sometimes useful for driving off cattle. If held out towards hounds when they pass you in a narrow lane it will keep them from coming too close to your pony. Always hold your crop with the hook downwards – not as you would hold a walking-stick, with handle up. If you are not



expecting to hunt, a bamboo cane or a stick may be all you need, unless you have many gates to open.

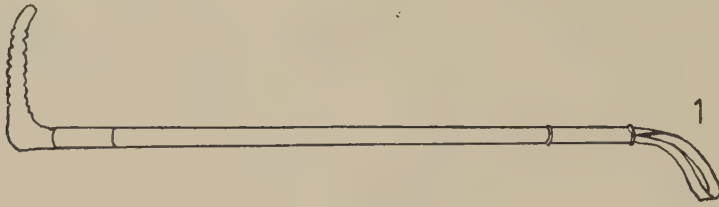


FIG. IX. HUNTING CROP

*1. Loop for attaching thong.*

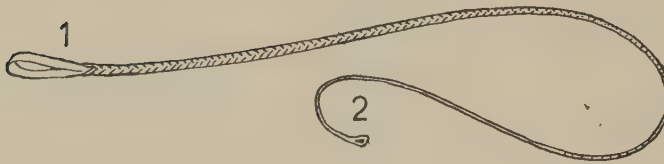


FIG. X. THONG OF PLAITED LEATHER

*1. Loop for attaching to end of crop.*

*2. Loop for scarlet lash to be attached to the end of the thong.*

## SPURS

Beginners should never wear spurs. A great hunting man used to say, 'Only one man in a hundred should wear spurs, and he should not use them'. Fortunately, blunt spurs are mainly used nowadays, and the cruel spurs of the past have gone, we may hope, for ever.

Recently I saw a hireling of spotless character bolting past my window at full gallop. He was a noble-looking old grey, particularly well mannered. I have admired him for quite fifteen years. The facts were these. The horse slipped on the tarmac, the rider, having an insecure seat, jabbed in her spurs to save herself. The horse naturally began to prance, making her feel still more insecure, and so she jabbed in her spurs more violently, and he understood that her wish was that he should gallop, which he did.

Here is another instance of the misuse of spurs. A little girl who was a fairly good rider came into a children's class at a big show on a very nice pony. A good many of the spectators were shocked to see that she had spurs on, and so was the pony, and when she touched him unexpectedly with them, he resented it so much that he bucked her off.

## Veterinary

*Colic – Coughs and Colds – Surfeit – Warbles – Sore Backs – Cuts and Wounds – Flies – Broken Knees – Lameness – Laminitis – Brushing – Itching Coats*

PONIES are very much sounder than horses; and fortunately ponies at grass are less likely to need a vet. than stabled ponies, because they are living a natural, healthy life.

If your pony is not well, be careful of whom you ask advice. Those who have horses in good condition under their care may be trusted. If your pony is really ill get the best vet. in your neighbourhood as soon as possible.

Here are a few notes on simple cures for the troubles you are most likely to meet.

### COLIC

Colic is like a bad internal pain in human beings, and the cause is likely to be either wrong feeding, or a chill, or both together.

It is a fairly common complaint. The pony is obviously in distress. He stops eating, looks continually round at his flanks, and sometimes throws himself down and rolls. If possible, get him into a comfortable loose-box with plenty of straw, and if his ears feel cold put a rug over him.

Give him nothing to eat for a couple of hours, and if he is no better by then send for the vet. There are many internal troubles which have symptoms difficult to distinguish, and a skilled opinion may be necessary. If, however, he seems quite bright again, give him a bran-mash, which will soothe his digestion and open his bowels.

The cause must be looked for; the trouble is digestive, and the result of some indiscretion in feeding. These are some of the commonest causes.

(1) Too many oats.

(2) Water given immediately after oats.

(3) Cold water given to an over-heated horse, resulting in a sudden chill. If you have been either out hunting or out for a long ride, always try to give your pony a drink at a pond or stream before you get home. He can drink quite well with his bit in. If you bring him into the stable and he then has a long drink, just as he begins to cool down, he may easily get chilled. In such circumstances water with the chill off would be safer.

If, however, you turn him straight out into his field, which is the wisest course,

he will, if he is thirsty, drink at his usual watering-place, and is not likely to get chilled because he will be moving about.

(4) A big feed given to a tired pony before he has rested sufficiently. A tired horse, like a tired man, is unable to digest. If you have no bran-mash ready for him turn him straight out and give him his usual quantity of hay. Go back and give him his proper feed in an hour's time, when he is a bit rested.

### COUGHS AND COLDS

These are not uncommon, especially during the autumn when ponies are changing their coats.

It is a well-known fact that a pony turned out to grass very seldom gets a cold. But a pony brought into the stable from grass frequently develops one. Such a cough is usually described as a 'grass-cough' but surely it would be more correct to call it a 'stable-cough'. The first symptom is a slightly running nostril, and directly that is seen take extra care of your pony, and see that he is not overdone in any way. If he seems dull, it would be wiser to leave him in for a day or two.

This cold often develops into a cough. You can buy for this an 'electuary'. This is a soothing paste which you put on his tongue, and it eases the cough a good deal. A grass-fed pony will probably throw off a cough without difficulty.

Many old ponies, or ponies who have been fed on musty hay or whose digestions have gone wrong from some other reason, suffer from 'broken wind'. They have a chronic cough, sometimes also a running at the nose, and they get very thin. Such ponies are only suitable for light slow work. They should always have their oats, chaff, and so on slightly damped, not wet.

If your pony is grass-kept, the more he is 'out' the better. Bring him in only for saddling or unsaddling. But if he is old or in poor health or of a delicate breed it may be necessary to bring him in every night in the cold weather.

If the weather is very bad, with biting winds and continuous heavy rain, you may find him in his field with tail to the wind in the most sheltered corner he can find, dripping wet, shaking with cold, and looking the picture of misery. On the rare occasions when this happened I used to bring my ponies in, cover their backs with dry straw and put a warm rug over them. The heat thus generated was amazing. They soon began to steam and dry up, when the rug was at once removed. On such an occasion the ears will be found to be stone cold. Dry them with a stable rubber, then take one ear in each hand and pull them alternately, gently. In other words 'strip the ears'. If you practise this and get your pony used to it, he learns to enjoy it, and it is amazing how quickly the warmth will come back. Once the ears are warm the whole body warms up too.



**SURFEIT**

This shows itself in round flat lumps about the size of a florin which appear mostly on the neck, shoulder, or back. The cause is digestive trouble, often over-feeding in some form. If he is in the stable give a bran-mash each evening until better, and mix into it from one to two level table-spoonfuls, according to the size of the pony, of flowers of sulphur. This is much the same cure as the brimstone and treacle for 'spots' with which past generations of children were familiar.

**WARBLES**

These are lumps much like surfeit in appearance, but fewer in number, harder, and far more persistent. They are caused by the larva of a large fly which is very troublesome to horses. If they happen to be under the saddle they may be the cause of much annoyance, as you can never tell when the pressure of the saddle may make them get sore and painful.

The quickest cure is to lance them when ripe with a sharp knife and squeeze out the grub. Then foment with hot water, and bathe daily with some disinfectant until cured. Of course you cannot ride your pony until the tenderness has gone. Sometimes they lie dormant and cause no trouble for months.

**SORE BACKS**

These may be caused by an ill-fitting saddle, or by removing the saddle hastily from a hot back, and may be complicated either by surfeit or warbles. A pony out of condition is in a tender state, and far more likely to suffer from trouble of this sort.

The treatment depends on the cause. Always try and bring your pony in fairly cool. If his back is at all inclined to tenderness, get off a quarter of a mile from home, loosen the girths, give the saddle a shake to shift it on the back, and lead him in. You can then remove the saddle, give the back a rub with a wisp of hay or sprinkle over it a handful of dry earth to dry it, and turn him out.

If the lump persists in coming up, try bathing it daily with salt and water to harden. Be sure to brush off any sharp crystals afterwards.

**CUTS AND WOUNDS**

Nothing is better for these than Jeyes Fluid. If the place is very sore and tender, say from a kick, bathe first with warm water; this will remove the tenderness.

**FLIES**

Jeyes sponged over the ears and neck is an excellent fly-driver, and sometimes most useful in hot weather.

## BROKEN KNEES

The trouble about broken knees is that quite a small injury may leave a permanent scar. We cannot therefore be too careful in our treatment. Our object should be to cleanse the wound, but on no account to extend its size by drastic treatment. Fill a bucket half full of water and disinfectant and hold your sponge above the wound so that the water trickles over it, but avoid touching the place itself. Do this twice a day and it will soon heal. If the wound is really deep send for the vet.

Many young horses fall through carelessness in the early months of their breaking. They are like growing children and are far more likely to fall in their early years than later on. If they are unlucky enough to fall on hard ground, they may easily be marked for life, through no serious fault of their own.

## LAMENESS

Many people ride slightly lame horses without knowing it. All riders should get into the way of listening for lameness. If they take their pony into a quiet road and trot very slowly they should be able to count the even hoof-beats 1, 2, 3, 4. If there is a stress on one beat more than the others, the pony is lame.

Lameness is usually in the forefeet. It is seldom in the shoulder.

First have a good look at the forefeet. Sometimes the pony has picked up a nail which you may be able to find embedded in his sole or in his frog. It must be carefully extracted, and the foot poulticed.

Another trouble is a bruised sole or a bruised frog. You will see the frog if you pick up the foot and look at the sole; a good well-developed frog is like a frog squatting down on the ground.

The feet in health are generally cold, though sometimes they are just warm. But if there is something wrong, the injured one is usually a good deal hotter than the other. If both are hot the trouble may be laminitis.

For all these troubles apply a wet bran poultice. To make it, put a pound of bran in a sack, and pour warm water over it. Pull the sack over the bad foot and tie it round the fetlock – not too tightly. Keep it damp and in three or four hours the heat will probably have gone. The inflammation will have worked outwards instead of inwards.

If the pony has been to the forge recently the trouble is usually a ‘prick in shoeing’. The blacksmith has by accident driven a nail too close to the sensitive part of the foot. Take him back to the forge and have the shoe off and follow the blacksmith’s advice. If the pony is not sound in a couple of days, seek skilled assistance.

**LAMINITIS**

If a pony shuffles along, and has no action at all, he is probably suffering from fever in the feet. Both feet are hot. Some ponies are particularly subject to this: it is brought on by wrong feeding of any sort, especially by feeding with overheating foods such as beans, or too many oats. I am told that Shetland ponies frequently get it from too rich grass. In mild forms it can be cured by removal of the cause, but in bad forms it constantly recurs.

**BRUSHING**

This is fairly common, especially among young horses whose action is not formed, or who have some peculiarity of action. One foot either in front or behind brushes against the opposite leg as the horse trots or canters, and soon makes a sore, usually on the fetlock.

Consult your blacksmith, he may be able to effect a cure by an alteration in the shoeing. Ponies who work without shoes seldom brush.

**ITCHING COATS**

Ponies are wonderfully free from any skin trouble or parasites, even when kept rough.

During spring and autumn, however, they are often troubled with itchy tails or manes, and they will then rub themselves against gates or fences. Lysol or Jeyes, well diluted and dabbed on two or three days running, will generally cure this.

A pony who has lost condition in the winter is sometimes found to have lice in his coat. Fortunately these all vanish with the coming of his short summer coat. These lice do not attack human beings.



# More about Condition and Management

*Clipping and Condition – Grass-kept Ponies for Older Riders – Regulation of Feeds – Shelter – The Right Sort to Buy – Different Ways of Buying – Different ways of Managing – Hirelings – Sunday*

## CLIPPING AND CONDITION

IN the winter the horse grows a long woolly coat for protection from the cold. Stabled horses have this coat removed by clipping, and are then well rugged up usually with a blanket and a rug so that they keep warm. The object of removing the coat is to enable the horse to do fast work without getting exhausted. They are clipped before November 1, the first hunting day; and again well before Christmas. The coat then keeps short until it is 'shifted' in the spring, and the beautiful spring coat takes its place.

If your pony is out at grass you must decide in October whether you want to half-clip him or not. Those who want to ride about quietly will find an unclipped pony with a long woolly coat quite satisfactory. But if you want your pony in harder condition you will find that clipping trace-high, (*i.e.* clipping away one-third of the coat over the belly only and leaving the pony his full top coat) will enable him to do faster work, and he can still be kept 'out'. (See p. 183).

It is not safe to clip more of the coat than this.

The clippers should be run from the point of the shoulder straight back in a level line to the hindquarters, following the line of the traces on a harness-horse. This removal of about one-third of the coat gives the pony relief from his heavy coat, and he still has a good top-coat to protect him. If more is taken off he may get a chill. The legs should be left unclipped, not only for warmth but also as a protection against thorns and scratches. The head and neck must also be left unclipped. Be careful to leave the grease in the grass-kept pony's coat, as this will keep him warm.

Some people speak well of the New Zealand waterproof rug. This should be useful for a stabled and clipped horse who is turned out into a field for a few hours to exercise himself. For a horse permanently out, it would be unlikely to remain waterproof for long. There would also be danger of sores where there was any pressure. These rugs are unsuitable for young or nervous horses, for if the

wind blew them about a nervous horse would start galloping and soon have an accident.

#### GRASS-KEPT PONIES FOR OLDER RIDERS

It is possible for the grown-up rider to keep a horse or pony at grass and look after it himself in just the same way as the child keeps his pony.

The horse must of course be unclipped, or clipped trace-high only. Those who are very particular about appearances will not care about this; for he will look rough in the winter though in summer he will look smart enough. But those who are not too particular about appearances and who do not want to work their horses hard find this outdoor plan invaluable. It will suit people who for one reason or another do not wish to open a stable, and there are some who take such intense interest in their horses that they find looking after them themselves, out at grass, gives them an insight into the horse's nature which they never had before. The care of the grass-kept horse is so simple that many people will enjoy doing it themselves, whereas the care of a horse in the stable would be for most of us almost a whole-time job.

A large part of the expense of keeping a horse goes on the groom's wages, and this will be saved. Moreover in these days good grooms are very hard to find. The pony kept 'out' needs very little grooming; he will not need strapping, but only brushing over, which is an easy job. The rules for looking after him properly are so simple that any intelligent person can do it, provided he is fond of animals and not afraid of them, whereas once we put our pony in the stable he must have skilled care, or he will never give satisfaction.

#### REGULATION OF FEEDS

Careful regulation of the feeds is necessary according to the horse's individual nature, the pasture, the work and the weather. All these need taking into account; his needs vary from week to week, and even from day to day.

Those who have not studied this question can hardly believe the difference made by, say, a week's cold wet weather, or putting the horses into fresh pasture, or an extra half-pound of oats at each feed.

We must carefully observe the lower line of the horse's belly. What we want is to get rid of the swollen grass-belly, and replace it by hard solid muscle on the quarters. When feeding is correct the lower line of the belly should run parallel with the ground, or slope very slightly upwards towards the hindquarters. If it is pendulous, the horse will do his work with difficulty, and even danger to his lungs, for fast work in such condition may break his wind. If it slopes too much he may be fit to gallop, but he is not carrying enough flesh to withstand the hardships of outdoor life.

The only way to get our horse in proper condition is by carefully proportioned work and feeding. The harder the work the more we can feed him.

The dung must be watched. It should be moderately soft, well formed, brittle, and light in colour. If it is hard and too solid, it probably means he needs more chaff or grass. It needs a farmer's eye to know whether grass is eatable or not – horses would rather starve than eat long sour grass. Cattle will tear this off, but until they do so, that part of the field is useless.

#### SHELTER

In the winter, if we can provide our horses with the shelter of snug farm buildings, warm and comfortable and sunny, we shall find that they are sometimes used. But the ordinary cattle-shed, less strongly and snugly built, which is all that most people can arrange for, is seldom occupied. Rather than use it horses usually prefer to lie out, however wild, cold and wet the weather may be, and they will not suffer provided that they are adequately fed. Shelter of some sort, however, they must get, either from buildings, or thick fences, trees, or banks.

In the summer, sheds are the greatest comfort to them unless they are brought in to the stable during the day-time. They need them both for shade, and for refuge from flies.

#### THE RIGHT SORT TO BUY

Care must be taken to buy a horse or pony of the right temperament. What we want is an energetic temperament, a horse perhaps who may be too 'hot' if stabled. These very keen horses do well when grass-kept. One often comes across a pony whose only fault is a tendency to over-keenness, and this type of animal is ideal for the outdoor life, which has a sedative effect. A good constitution must also be looked for. One horse will keep his health and spirits and do his work cheerfully where another would find conditions too hard and would soon begin to look poor.

You will be wise to buy your horse out of a field and not out of a stable. If you can find a horse who is kept out and is in good spirits during the early months of the year you may feel confident that he has the right constitution.

Breeding is of great importance. Avoid common (carthorse) blood. Such horses run to fat and laziness. They are unsuitable for riding, and they are heavy and clumsy. Their reactions are slow; if they tread on your foot they take an appreciable time to realize it. If they fall with you they lie on you and grunt. One often sees horses which are half or one-quarter carthorse in the hunting-field. The stain in their pedigree is concealed so far as is possible by careful attention to trimming. But if one sees these horses in the rough out at grass, there is no concealing their breeding and the 'hairy-heel' is very apparent.



A NEW FOREST PONY  
AFTER SKILFUL  
TRAINING

*He has won many 'best-trained pony' tests. He came fourth in the Open Dressage Championship, the only pony amongst many distinguished horses.*



THE SAME PONY,  
ROBIN, 'IN THE  
ROUGH', AS HE  
WAS PURCHASED

*To judge horses and ponies  
in the rough is very difficult.*



A NATIVE PONY SHOWS THE WAY

*The native pony has both sure-footedness and brains; few hunters could safely negotiate a place like this, full of treacherous rabbit holes.*



At the other end of the scale avoid a horse with too much thoroughbred or Arab blood. It is not likely that either would do well living out; both are used to warmth and comfort. The small horse will be found to thrive best, *i.e.*, horses under 15 hands high.

There seems to be nowadays a fancy for big horses; and hunters seem to be steadily increasing in size. At the end of last century 16 hands was considered full size for a hunter, but now 16·1 and 16·2 are not thought oversized. Unfortunately soundness and stamina have not increased in proportion. It is difficult to believe that it was on ponies of 12·2 hands, *i.e.*, the average size of the Exmoor, Dartmoor, and Welsh Mountain pony that our Army officers played polo in India not very long ago. The more Moorland pony blood a horse has the harder and sounder he is likely to be. There are three large ponies to select from; all are good and all of entirely different types – the Highland, the Connemara and the Fell ponies.

#### BUYING

If you cannot buy your pony from a farmer, go to a local dealer who has a good reputation and ask him if he has a suitable animal. If you see a pony you like ask the dealer to let you hire him for a week or more. And then get a vet. to give his opinion as to age, soundness, and suitability.

It is unwise for beginners to try to buy a horse for themselves. They cannot tell whether the horse is up to their weight, or whether he is sound, or whether he is too young or too old, or otherwise quite unsuitable for them. They must try to get a friend to buy for them – remembering always that the best judge cannot be certain of what he is buying.

It is important to go to the right type of dealer. Some deal in expensive horses and keep nothing at under £150, others deal in horses at an average value of £70, others less. Some deal only in young sound horses; others are noted for having mainly horses with a gift for jumping, though they may be no longer young; and some have horses technically unsound and unable to pass the vet., although they may be sound enough for ordinary work. It may be quite a good plan to buy a horse which you like and have often ridden from a livery stable.

If you have ordinary luck, you should, if you want to, be able to sell your horse without much loss. Horses out at grass are so healthy that they do not often go wrong, and are much more likely to keep sound than hunters whose strenuous life is often too great a strain on their soundness.

#### DIFFERENT WAYS OF MANAGING

There are many other ways of keeping horses besides the ordinary method of keeping them in a stable. Far too little is in print about other ways of managing,



and one has to pick up knowledge as one goes along. There are many modifications of the grass-kept method described in this book. There are dealers who keep their surplus horses unclipped in a field with little grass, feeding them on full rations of dry food, and when they need extra horses they get them up, clip them, and have them in hard condition with little delay. That great horse-master Macpherson, of the Randolph Stables, Oxford, who mounted Oxford undergraduates for hunting, the drag, and polo throughout a long series of years, and who kept his excellent horses in first-rate condition, had a successful method of making the change over from hunters to polo ponies. The ponies were out all the winter, in Christ Church Meadows. Early in March dry feeding was started. Each pony had his own feed-box, and directly the cart arrived with their rations they would gallop up and each go to his own box. After about six weeks of this they were fairly fit with all the exercise they took, and were then brought into the stable. They had the best of grooming and management and in a very short time were fit to play.

A friend living in a south coast watering-place found that building was spoiling all the good rides. Being small and light, she bought a keen Exmoor pony, kept him with a farmer half an hour away by motor-bus, and twice a week she goes out for a ride. The pony is delighted to see her. He trots up to her at once, and in ten minutes she has him saddled and bridled with the best of country all around her.

Another grown-up friend, who has a small house and an acre of grass, keeps a New Forest pony, feeds him with hay and a feed of oats when the grass gets scarce, and rides whenever she likes. Neither of these girls have the wish to start a stable, nor do they want the expense, but a grass-fed pony just meets their requirements of a quiet ride to see the country two or three times a week.

People talk of the lack of adventure in modern life; the girls described below had no dull moment and no lack of adventures.

One was a girl working hard in London, very anxious to learn to ride. She had a few lessons and made good progress, and suddenly, to the astonishment of her friends, announced that she had bought a pony from her riding-master, and was having it boxed down to the West Country for her fortnight's holiday. She and a more experienced friend rode together over Exmoor, usually putting up at farms *en route*; and at the end of this fortnight the party appeared to be in first-class condition. All four had thoroughly enjoyed themselves; the pace had never been more than a walk, for, as the girls said, the country was so beautiful, they could not fully enjoy it if they went faster. This fortnight with a knowledgeable friend just gave this girl that insight into horse life which the riding-school cannot teach, and helped her, too, to get right down in her saddle. I saw them at the beginning and the end of their tour. The ponies had improved and looked hard and fit, and the novice looked a novice no longer. She asserted that it was

far and away the best holiday she had ever had. The ponies were kept out, and oat-fed night and morning. Once one begins to look for stabling, one's difficulties are increased a hundredfold. Such a holiday leaves one with life-long memories.

These are by-roads of the horse world deserving of study. If you are sufficiently keen on horses, you manage to keep them in spite of adverse circumstances. Many people get their riding simply because they put it first, as most Irish people do; it is often not so much a matter of sufficient money as of sufficient keenness. It is interesting to observe sporting farmers and their methods; they know a great deal which most horse owners are ignorant of, and have plenty of fun stag-hunting and fox-hunting at very little expense. It is clear that thousands of people who say 'I should certainly ride, only I cannot afford it', are deceiving themselves.

#### HIRELINGS

Beginners who start their riding career with good lessons, and then continue their education on a grass-kept horse will make great progress. They will derive, too, great benefit from riding hirelings and see quite a new light on horsemanship. It is important to ride as many different horses as possible, for it is a great mistake to get so used to one horse that one feels strange on another. No two are alike, they all need riding differently, and they all have their different ways just like human beings. The hireling, generally speaking, is a quiet animal, and a fool-proof one, for if he had any tricks he would soon get the better of the less accomplished of his riders. Generally speaking his besetting sin is pulling, because many beginners have the habit of taking a firm hold of his head either to steady their seats or because they fear that he is going to 'run away' with them. This fear is unfounded, for horses who run away are very scarce. There are, however, a very large number of horses who like to 'take charge' of their rider when galloping across some well-known stretch of turf. To steady such horses is extremely difficult. His various riders have probably taught him that at a certain place on the ride they expect him to gallop, and he learns a thing like that very quickly.

If you are a beginner tell the owner of the stable; there is nothing to be ashamed of and everyone must begin some time. Tell him also if you are nervous. It is important to match the horse with the rider and if you are a stranger to him that will be helpful in his selection. You will be wise also to go out with an instructor until you feel quite at home. Livery stables are of many sorts; in some the horses are of good quality and the stable management so excellent that most private owners may well envy it; in others the horses are of poorer quality and the management may vary from fairly good to very bad.

Those who hire, often seem to think that the livery-stable keeper charges too

much, but this is far from the truth, for the cost of the upkeep of such stables is very heavy. The risks, too, of injury to horses are great; they come mainly from the ignorance or carelessness of riders.

The hirer has definite duties to his horse, and should treat him with just as much care as he would treat his own. When hacking and hiring by the hour, remember that ten to twelve miles a day at the average rate of about six miles an hour is a fair day's work for a horse; and it is not fair to take the last ounce out of so generous an animal. Some hirers are extraordinarily inconsiderate, and the harder they are on their horses the more ready are they to blame them for all sorts of offences which should properly be laid at their own door.

Start off at a walk and remember that modern roads are unsuitable for horses – they are much too hard – and fast work on them will soon ruin their legs and feet. Also the slipperiness of these roads may bring horse and rider down at any minute.

The pace, therefore, on main roads should usually be a walk, and never more than a slow trot. When you get off the main road and come to a nice bit of grass or perhaps a muddy lane, that is the place for a gallop. Hirelings should never be raced, nothing ruins manners more quickly.

The last half-mile of your ride should be at walking pace. It is important to bring your horse in cool, otherwise a groom's time is taken up in walking him about, or if he is too busy he is put into the stable and will be likely to get a chill. Many horses which have been ridden hard have an unfortunate habit of breaking out into a sweat after they have come in apparently cool. On a wet day, the horse can be trotted right up to his stable door; for when his coat is streaming wet, he can be put in at once. The heat from his body will dry the moisture, and there will be in this instance no danger of his breaking out into a sweat. If a horse is hired for 'hacking' he must not be jumped, or hunting prices will be charged.

Horses hired for hunting need special knowledge and care on the part of the rider, who should remember that it is nearly always at the end of a hard day that strains and so on occur, and who should not, therefore, be too anxious to exact his last ounce. The horse should be taken to the meet and home again at a steady pace of six miles an hour. This pace tires him less than any other. After hunting, horses easily get chilled, and special care must therefore be taken. It is far safer to get them home at once, even though they may be tired. There are very few inns today which can be trusted to look after a tired hunter.

The horse should never be left at an inn without the rider assuring himself that girths are loosened, a rug on, the bridle off, a drink of gruel (oatmeal in water) or chilled water already drunk up, and some good hay in the rack, or a small 'feed'. Remember that your hireling has a hard life, and that he has probably



seen great days. How much I owe to them! Many a hireling belongs to the courageous 'Battered Brigade' of whom Will Ogilvie says:

*And I'll lay you my cheque at the banker's  
They're forward next week undismayed.  
Good luck to the blemished front rankers!  
Hats off to the Battered Brigade!*

SUNDAY

Modern methods of observing Sunday are hard on the horse, as on many human beings. At the Randolph Stables in Oxford, where we used to keep our horses, there was an unlimited supply of carrots for the horses on Sundays. All visitors were provided with these, all the horses were at home, and it was a Sunday treat for horse-lovers to go round and visit their favourites. Nowadays, Sunday is, if anything, the hardest day of all for the hireling. Sympathetic riders will do their best to give him his day of rest.

# The Riding Holiday

*The Best Way of Seeing the Country – The Horse – Sending Horses and Ponies by Rail – Exmoor a Paradise for Riders – Our Plan of Management – Grooming*

## THE BEST WAY OF SEEING THE COUNTRY

THERE are only two ways of really getting to know the country. The first is to walk, and this perhaps is the best of all, but it is not suitable to everybody. Our climate is not conducive to great efforts in this direction, and there are very few who have the energy really to walk unless they are in bracing air.

The other way is to ride. It is not quite so good from the point of view of seeing the country, because one's attention is divided between the charms of one's horse and the beauty of the country, but it calls for less energy, and it appeals to many who would not dream of walking more than a mile or two.

How glorious it is to settle down for a month in the centre of good riding country, miles away from a main road, and explore it with the aid of an Ordnance map, marking off the ways one goes in red chalk, until one's farm becomes the centre of a red network of tracks. Each mile has happy memories, doubled by the fact that it is shared by that perfect companion, the horse.

One needs a month's holiday to make this plan worth while, as unless you know your district well, preliminary arrangements take time. It is not suited to the winter, for the long coat of the horse complicates matters. But it is suitable for Easter when he is losing his coat, or for summer when he is so smart that he is not easily distinguished from a stabled horse.

Choose a district suitable for riding – Dartmoor, Exmoor, the New Forest, the Dorset Downs, Savernake Forest and the Wiltshire Downs, or the Sussex Downs. Ask all your friends if they know of good farmhouse lodgings in that district, and you will not be long before you get on the right track. Do not expect hot baths and indoor sanitation; your forefathers got on very well without these luxuries, and so can you. Farms in the best country are usually without these things; you will have instead the charm of the real country, food plain but of the best, and the opportunity of getting to know those delightful people, the farmer and his wife.

## THE HORSE

Having fixed on your farm, tell the farmer you want a horse to ride about quietly and keep out at grass. Possibly he will have one for you, if not he will tell you where you can best get one.

At one time, when I was living in a town, I kept a cheery New Forest pony of very tough constitution at my favourite farm. When I wanted a holiday he was given a daily feed of oats a fortnight before my arrival, and later two feeds a day gave him plenty of life to carry me cheerfully all over the country. It doubles one's pleasure to have one's own horse. Some people take their hunters to Exmoor in August and so get them gradually into hunting condition. You get to know your favourites far more intimately in this way than in any other.

#### SENDING HORSES AND PONIES BY RAIL

A railway carriage for horses contains three horse-boxes. The partitions in horse-boxes are made to fit horses, and tied up in one of these, a horse who is used to it will travel comfortably. But it is not safe for small ponies, unless they are very quiet and thoroughly used to being tied up. The only safe method is to have the partitions taken out, so that the pony has the whole carriage to himself and can travel quite loose. This, of course, costs more than a box; on the other hand, the railway makes a reduction for small ponies. Two or three ponies with hind shoes off will, if they are friends, travel comfortably in such a carriage, and the individual fare may thus be reduced.

#### EXMOOR A PARADISE FOR RIDERS

Exmoor is a paradise for those who love horse and hound, and the beauty of the country is unsurpassed. Here is all the loveliness of rolling hill and moors, purple with heather or gold with bracken; there in the deep valley are ancient oak trees, and swift rivers with their mossy stones and deep brown pools. The farmers welcome people who are fond of horses and dogs. You can ride for hours, meeting not a soul, and far from the disturbing hoot of the motor. This is the way to get down in your saddle, and give your horses a really enjoyable holiday.

#### OUR PLAN OF MANAGEMENT

We have found this plan of management satisfactory. After breakfast – say at 9.30 – go and fetch your horse. He will probably be waiting for you, with his head hanging over the gate. Water him, unless there is water in the field or unless it has been raining, when the moisture in the grass will be sufficient. Then put him in the stable and give him his first feed, say three pounds of best oats, mixed with best chopped hay. The amount of hay will be regulated by the amount and goodness of the grass. The best forage is none too good and the better it is the more energy your horse will have. Sometimes it suits him better to have his food just damped, it thus approximates more nearly to the grass. He takes about half an hour to eat this, and he must then have at least an hour in the stables to digest it.



About 11.30 you saddle him and ride forth. A horse fed like this must not be hurried, but if he has a little condition to start with, you can ride for say three hours at a moderate pace, walk, trot and canter, without tiring him. Give him a drink at a stream if he is thirsty, but if he drinks a great deal he will go heavily after it. Do not let him keep on drinking at every stream; he is like a child and likes dabbling in the water, but one drink should be sufficient. When you have found a really beautiful spot for lunch, get off, loosen the girths, and take off the curb-chain so that he can pick a few leaves or blades of grass. You may have to hold him if he is fidgety, but if he is quiet enough you can hitch the end of the reins over the branch of a tree about level with his head. This will keep him quiet for a short time, but you must keep your eye on him. On no account use the reins to tie him up, they are easily snapped. If you really want to tie him up for an hour or so, take a leather halter and a rope and tie him to a fence. If he is happy and comfortable he will wait quietly.

On your return, be careful to bring him in cool. His back must be dried where he has sweated under the saddle, or you may be troubled with a sore back. You want, too, to restore the circulation which your weight has impeded. A good rub with a handful of straw is perhaps the best way, or sprinkle some dry earth on it. Then turn him out at once, wet or fine. This is most important. He will do far better in the fresh air, moving about and grazing, than in the stable, where he must stand still, and will probably break out, get chilled, and get a cough.

At about 6.30 p.m. feed him as before. This feed can be given in a tub in the field – one tub for each horse – if you want to save the trouble of bringing him in again. If he gets too fat, the grass or hay or oats must be reduced or more work given.

We usually ride for three or four hours, going fifteen to twenty miles, and give the horses a rest the next day.

Farmers make great use of the grass-kept horse, and can often give one valuable hints. They say, ‘never take a horse in and out of the stable, keep him altogether out or altogether in’. And ‘never give a horse so much to eat that he stands about under the hedges and catches cold, for as long as he is moving about he will never catch cold’.

This sort of life appeals to the horse. He loves the outdoor life, and his shining eye as he gazes over the gate awaiting his owner shows how well it agrees with him. He thoroughly enjoys the variety too, and he likes exploring the country as much as we do.

#### GROOMING

Your horse will need no grooming. Horses kept in the open keep themselves clean, and if you groom them and so take the grease out of their coats they are unable to withstand the weather. Take a dandy-brush to brush off the mud and

sweat, and a curry-comb to clean the brush. A body-brush is not needed for the outdoor horse.

One needs extra luggage on this sort of holiday. We take saddle, bridle, pail, saddle-soap, dandy brush, and curry comb, and are careful to order the forage a good time ahead.

Before the first World War we kept our horses in stables with a groom to look after them. Such a possibility as taking a horse away without a groom never occurred to us. The War taught us much, among other things the possibilities of the grass-fed horse. We personally have learnt more of horses and got more pleasure out of them since we discovered this method of riding holidays. One has a chance of getting really intimate with one's horse, and he is worth it. It has also solved the always difficult question of holidays. Those who dislike crowds always have difficulty about planning a holiday in a beautiful neighbourhood, with plenty to do as well.

## CHAPTER TWENTY

# Dressage and Haute École

*Dressage, or Horse-training – Haute École, or the Higher Education of the Horse*

### DRESSAGE, OR HORSE-TRAINING

THERE is no reason why beginners should read this chapter unless they have heard these subjects talked about and want to know something about them.

Dressage is simply the French word for horse-training, and it would simplify matters if the English word was always used by English people. There have been in the past countless ways of training the horse – good, bad and indifferent. In the British Isles we have always had many excellent horse-trainers. There have also been – and there still are – many bad ones who use harsh methods and often ruin their horses instead of training them.

Modern ideas of horse-training have come to us from the Cavalry School at Weedon where during the first quarter of this century the art of training both horse and rider reached a very high level. It is unlikely that the standard at Weedon will ever be surpassed in this country. Young officers of promise were sent to study equitation abroad, and brought back from many countries various methods which, if found useful, were incorporated into the system of training.

The standard was a very high one, far higher than that given to the majority of civilian horses. To train a horse well takes a great deal of time, and skilled work costs money. For this reason most hunters and hacks are sold as soon as they are quiet enough to carry a rider, and only the high-priced horses have been really well-trained.

The desire to have better trained horses has led to many enthusiasts in recent years studying horse-training. They realize that it is not enough to buy a well-trained horse; they themselves must be able to keep him up to the mark. The best-trained horse will soon deteriorate in the hands of an indifferent horseman, so that it is up to every one who wants to own a really good horse to study the subject of horse-training if he wishes to keep his horse as he should be. He cannot do this unless he knows nearly as much as the good horse-trainer; there is no hard and fast line between the two.

This lesson was brought home to me early in my hunting career. A certain lady who was very wealthy, and had recently come to hunt with our quiet country pack, purchased a marvellous hunter from a well-known dealer in the Shires for a very big price. This horse was a beauty, she was a good performer,



and very quiet and well-mannered. Unfortunately the lady was inexperienced and also a little nervous. She said the horse pulled, and put her into a long-cheeked double bridle. Then her oats were reduced; stable-management was bad and in a few weeks this lovely creature came out looking not worth one-quarter of the price which had been paid for her. The severe bit and reduced oats had had the result of lowering her head and ruining her beautiful carriage.

Dressage however is not for everybody. There are large numbers of people who ride, who have neither the time nor the wish to study horse-training or anything more than the rudiments of horsemanship. Such people can get any amount of pleasure out of riding about quietly on a horse suited to them.

The important thing is not to deceive oneself as to one's capabilities. Dressage goes a long way beyond the capabilities of the majority of riders, and this fact is too little recognized today.

At one time horses were too little trained. Now many of them suffer from incompetent over-training, which is far worse. There are children who think that they are far more advanced than they really are. One hears them talking about 'schooling their ponies', 'making their pony change his leg', 'showing their pony where to take off', when they are quite incapable of doing any of these things. It is easy to ruin a pony. Today we need a great deal less theory, and a great deal more practice of horsemanship.

But for those few who put horses and horsemanship first, the reward of learning how to train is great. A good horseman will be able to improve his mounts; to buy a half-broken horse and turn him into a well-broken one; and to cure any faults which he may have acquired. All this is even more true of children's ponies, for their training has often been of the most rudimentary description. There are also many good ponies who have been ruined by careless riders, for a child with low standards will soon spoil the best pony.

Fortunately there are many children who will do everything in their power to prevent their pony deteriorating. Such children will learn all they can about horse-training, and they will find themselves repaid a hundredfold. Young riders who are sufficiently advanced to train ponies are badly needed. If more children obtained the highest Certificate in the Pony Club, they would be able to undertake this work, and the difficulty of buying well-trained ponies would be solved.

Children today are fortunate because some of our highly trained cavalry officers, helped by distinguished horsemen and horsewomen from the various hunts, are giving their services to the Pony Club. The old tradition of good horsemanship is thus being handed on to the younger generation. This is very necessary, for it must be remembered that we have no longer any school of horsemanship in this country.

Where exactly are we to stop in teaching our horses? That is a question for enthusiasts today. The horse is so teachable that he is always willing to learn,

there is no difficulty about that. But there comes a point at which his trainer must decide what is the end in view. Is he to spend his life as a star performer in the constricted life of the show-ring or the riding-school, automatically responding to the wishes of his rider, or is he to have the free and glorious life of a good horse across country, or of a first-class riding-horse?

If an outdoor life is the end in view, do not take from him his power of taking the initiative. For instance, both a hunter and a riding-horse will be more efficient if they have always themselves decided when to change the leading leg, and exactly where to take off at their fences. Both these things they will do far better without waiting for any signal from their rider. On the other hand if he is to spend his life mainly in dressage or as a show-horse, it may be necessary that he should learn them.

It should be remembered that there are many different schools of horsemanship and many different ways of training and riding horses. The Italian school, for example, believes in a more natural way of training. One modern writer speaks of 'the equestrian Eden to which the snaffle is one of the keys'. They believe in a snaffle bridle both for hunting and polo, and it is quite certain that directly we put a double bridle in a pony's mouth, we are faced with fifty problems which we did not have before.

#### HAUTE ÉCOLE, OR THE HIGHER EDUCATION OF THE HORSE

The theory of horse-training comes to us mainly from France, which accounts for the use of many French words. Many of these words prove a stumbling-block, and it is a pity that the trouble of translating them has never been squarely faced. Such words, for example, as 'dressage', '*haute école*', 'the passage' and 'the aids', 'take-and-give' are often misunderstood.

There is unfortunately no English equivalent for *haute école*. The translation 'high school' gives an entirely wrong impression. 'High school' to us means a school of a quite ordinary standard of education, whereas students of *haute école* are striving to attain a very high standard indeed. Obviously, then, *haute école* is not for everyone.

On the Continent this is clearly understood. In this country, unfortunately, a large number of people seem to think that they are sufficiently advanced to study *haute école*. One lady told me that her little girl was studying it and had made great progress.

On the Continent they know that even among the very best horsemen there will be very few indeed sufficiently gifted to study *haute école*. We once had the great pleasure of visiting the Swiss Cavalry School at Thun. These horses – all of them Irish – and their Swiss riders gave a magnificent display of jumping. We were very much impressed at the very high standard attained – at that time the

Swiss were winning all over Europe. At the end of the performance the Commandant said to us 'We have here one officer who is a student of *haute école*. Would you care to see him?' We then saw in the riding-school an interesting display which we were unfortunately not sufficiently educated to understand. The Commandant then made this remark: 'It is only very rarely that one finds a horseman sufficiently gifted to study this great art and when one does one must value him as one would some great musician or painter.' Obviously he classed exponents of *haute école* with the geniuses in other walks of life.

The *haute école* horse gives up his own initiative, he is absolutely obedient to his rider's legs and hands. He executes certain well-known steps mainly with his weight on his hindlegs, and very beautiful he looks. He might be described as an equine ballet-dancer. He was originally a war-horse, used in olden times by the knight in armour, whose sword was doubly effective when the 'great horse' could be made to rear up at will and so increase the power of the blow on the enemy's skull.

The study of *haute école* was entirely given up in England about the middle of the last century because it was found that so many horses were ruined by bad training. It has been revived recently in this country, and there is a divergence of opinion as to whether the French, the Italian, the Austrian or other school should be followed. My own feeling is that many more riders might usefully study the earlier steps of horse-training but that only those who have distinguished themselves in this comparatively speaking simple art should contemplate the far more advanced art of *haute école*. A first-class instructor must be found, and this will not be easy. It must be remembered that it is extremely easy to spoil a horse. Riders frequently think that they are teaching their horses when they are doing nothing of the kind. Recently a thoroughbred mare was bought by a young man who wished to train her in *haute école*. She was already beautifully broken. The would-be trainer, instead of training her, ruined her. After a week or two she refused to go fifty yards down the road without trouble. No one could do anything with her and she was eventually sold for thirty guineas. This is by no means the only case of the sort.

The most gifted exponent of *haute école* was James Fillis, who reached high renown in Paris at the end of the last century. His great book on horse-training was translated into English and became one of the textbooks of the British Cavalry. He trained thoroughbred horses only, and believed in light double bridles used sometimes without a curb-chain.

It was Fillis's book which solved for me a problem which had long puzzled me, and which may perhaps still puzzle some of those who are studying the art of horsemanship. In my early years I constantly read, or was told by my elders, that I should 'give-and-take' with my pony. This appeared to be the solution of all difficulties. If the pony walked too slowly, it was because I did not 'give-and-take' with



him. If he pulled it was the same thing. It appeared to be something which I ought to understand, but which nobody could explain, and I could make neither head nor tail of it. I thought a great deal about it and asked for further information, but I never got it. Years after I at last discovered the meaning of this phrase. James Fillis repeatedly stresses the importance of *prendre et rendre* – ‘take-and-give’. He says the whole of horsemanship is founded on this phrase, and so it is. You ask your pony to stop by pulling the reins and directly he obeys you yield the reins as a reward. You ‘take and you give’. You ask him to go on by applying your legs, and the moment he moves you remove the pressure and so reward him for obedience; you ‘take and give’, you ask for what you want and you reward obedience. There is no other way of training the horse or indeed any animal. How else can you make him understand? But if *prendre et rendre* is translated into English, as it often has been, as ‘give-and-take’, it means nothing. It is perhaps responsible for the way in which some riders work their hands and their legs without rhyme or reason.

Readers should be warned against any system of horse-training which teaches that the profile of a horse’s head should be at right-angles to the ground. This must be wrong. The horse is so made that he cannot see properly when his nose is brought in so much. Every child can prove this for himself by riding his pony over rough ground with his nose brought in to the perpendicular. Stumbles will be continual, and this interference with his natural way of moving would be fatal to his sure-footedness.

Exponents of *haute école* reduce their horses to reflexes of themselves. Hunting people have an entirely different ideal. They believe in partnership between horse and rider in which the horse, though obedient, is allowed sufficient independence to use the very superior gifts with which he is endowed. A good hunter could not also be a good *haute école* horse; and therefore, after a horse has been efficiently trained, we come to the parting of the ways.

# Hunting

*Fox-hunting – Expenses – The Hunter – Scent – Hunting on foot – The First Hunt on Your Pony – Pace – Fences – Different Hunting Countries – The Rider's Manners – Hunting People – Crops, Gates, etc. – Your First Good Run*

*There's colour in the woodlands as far as eye can reach,  
Pale gold upon the elm tree and bronze upon the beech;  
To witch the world with beauty a hundred hues ally –  
But bonniest is the scarlet when the Whip rides by.*

W. O.

## FOX-HUNTING

Do not make up your mind as to whether hunting is cruel or not without due consideration. A lady recently said to me: 'All my life I have worked for animals and I am so glad to hear that it has now been decided that the fox is not to be killed by the hounds but by the humane-killer.' Remarks showing such muddled thinking are not rare. A recent writer condemning fox-hunting announced that he felt sure some method could be found of painlessly capturing and destroying all the foxes in the British Isles. What, I wonder, would the fox say to that suggestion from his 'friend'? It is certain that both fox and deer – in their wild state – would soon become extinct in the British Isles, if hunting were abolished. The methods suggested of exterminating foxes by shooting, poisoning or trapping are all uncertain and therefore cruel.

Those who condemn hunting must condemn also the carnivorous habits of the human race. It is difficult to see how people can condemn one without condemning the other also. No one preys more upon other animals than does man; he is indeed 'red in tooth and claw'; he is always preying upon other animals, and often quite unnecessarily. Is it worse to kill a fox because you enjoy hunting him than to kill a lamb because you enjoy eating him? The lamb is the gentlest and most harmless of animals. He is herbivorous, he never kills anything. Human beings treat him at first with every kindness, and then suddenly turn on him and drive him to the slaughter-house. It is a very long time ago since Oliver Goldsmith wrote that he could not understand how some people could talk often of their deep affection for animals and then enjoy a savoury stew composed of many different sorts of their 'friends'.

The lamb has much more cause to complain of humanity than the fox. The

fox is a wild animal, not a tame one; he has never looked to man as a protector. He is fierce and courageous. He lives by hunting and killing, and thoroughly understands the rules of the game.

Man is far kinder to him than he is to many other animals. For half the year he has an idyllic time – nobody is allowed to molest either him or his family. He is carefully preserved for these six months when the cubs are born and are growing up. But in the winter months he will be protected no longer. Hounds are out to kill him and well he knows it. But even then he is given a sporting chance. He is not driven to the butcher like the lamb with the certainty of being slaughtered. He is hunted, it is true, but the rules are strictly observed. He may never be 'found', there may be 'no scent', hounds may 'change'. He may get 'to ground', he may foil his pursuers in a hundred ways, for he is a past-master in the art of evading pursuit, and he may live to laugh at his pursuers for many seasons. To kill a fox with a pack of hounds is difficult. The pack must be a good one, they must have a good huntsman and more often than not the hunted fox escapes. Blank days when a fox is not even 'found', or days when no fox is killed, are frequent.

Hunting is typically a sport of Great Britain and Ireland, and one of which we may well be proud. It gives us a true picture of life itself. W. Bromley Davenport tells us something about this in *The Dream of an Old Meltonian*. What pictures it calls up to every one who has hunted!

*Though a roughriding world may bespatter your breeches,  
Though sorrow may cross you and slander revile;  
Though you plunge overhead in misfortunes' deep ditches  
Shun the gap of deception, the handgate of guile.  
O, avoid them, for there see the crowd is contending,  
Ignoble the object, unmannered the throng.  
Shun the miry lane, falsehood, with turns never ending,  
Ride straight for truth's timber, no matter how strong.*

Will Ogilvie has much the same thought when he sings:

*And in the larger field of life let skitters stand aside,  
Make way for those who want to work and those who dare to ride.  
The only one who's worth a place to risk a fall with fate  
Is he who steels his gallant heart and rides his country straight.*

Nowhere is character more clearly revealed than in the hunting field. There we see the selfish and self-centred, the kindly and the generous, the brave, hungering for fences to jump, and the nervous hoping that there will not be any. All as clearly defined as if they were labelled. But in the evening by the fireside





MEMBERS OF THE PONY  
CLUB WITH HAY-NETS

*If you are lucky enough to be a member of the Pony Club, you will learn not only how to ride but how to look after your pony.*

A WELSH PONY OUT  
HUNTING

*A child who has a native pony can at a low cost have all the joys of hunting before the age of fourteen. When a bigger stabled horse is needed expenses are greatly increased. This pony is clipped 'trace-high'; he can therefore, having the greater part of his coat, live 'out' if necessary.*





HUNTING IN IRELAND

*Hunting in unspoilt country. A well-mounted 'field' which 'means going.'*



this revelation of character is clear no longer. Many of the talkers seem to have quite changed their character and present themselves not as they are but as they wish to be.

Hunting is the most democratic sport in the world. In most countries the farmers turn out in force. Recently they have taken over many packs and hunt them themselves. Watch that old country labourer standing on the edge of the big woodland in which hounds are running, go and stand by him; you will be a good man if you can follow as well as he can what is going on in the wood's unseen depths. His ear tells him every twist of the fox, every turn that the hounds make. The joy of the hunt is in him as in you. He may wish he had a mount, but he does not grudge you yours. You and he will be closer to one another for your hunting shared – and there will be a bond of sympathy between you which nothing else will give.

How much money it brings, too, to the country, where it is so badly wanted. It is hunting which brings people to the country in the winter and holds them there. How it brightens the dull days, so that to many people the winter is the best time of the whole year.

For sheer beauty what can compare with it? No artist could invent a colour scheme more beautiful in harmony and contrast than the dappled hounds, the touch of sunshine, the horses, the greys and browns of the winter landscape and the touch of hunting-pink which gives point to the whole. And what glorious places hunting takes us to, places that otherwise we should never visit. Every hunting man can call up a hundred pictures to his mind's eye of country joys and beauties. How few people except those who ride or hunt have any knowledge of the countryside in winter. The miry, splashy lanes, the brown ridge and furrow of the big ploughed field, the golden stubble, the gorse coverts, the little oak woods, or the glorious sun setting behind the row of big elms. And always in the foreground beautiful horses and the dappled hounds.

I well remember my first day's hunting. It was on the South Downs, where one seems high up near the sky amid the open sweeps of downland, short turf and golden gorse. The joy of seeing so many beautiful horses and watching the hounds working, and the pleasure my own horse took in it all, seemed so wonderful that, although we had a blank day, I went home feeling that if I could have a day like that once a week my cup of joy would be full.

If you are in soft condition you may find it necessary the day after hunting to eat your breakfast off the mantelpiece!

#### EXPENSES

The expenses of hunting a pack of hounds are nowadays enormous. They include the feeding of the hounds, the payment of hunt servants, cost of horses,



payments for poultry, repairing fences, taking down wire, and so on. The M.F.H. usually pays a large share of this, and we should be duly grateful to him.

Every hunt has to decide on the amount of subscription to be paid: this can be ascertained by writing to the Hunt Secretary. Pony Club members are given special facilities. The subscription should be paid early in the season. If it is beyond your means there is no hope for you in that country, but there may be hope in a more out of the way country where things are not so smart, but may be even more enjoyable.

Masters of Hounds are glad to see people on foot come out to see the hounds. Those on foot are not expected to subscribe. They must be careful to keep with the 'field' so that there is no danger of 'heading the fox', which is easily done. Children on ponies out for an hour or two would not be expected to subscribe either. They too must keep with the 'field'.

#### THE HUNTER

Any horse who goes hunting is called a hunter. The grown-up beginner should buy an old hunter who knows the game. A young horse will probably get over-excited and be a nuisance. This is of more importance still with the child's pony. So many of them, even when grass-fed, are too keen with hounds and are no good at all for young riders. I suppose this is the reason that one often sees children mounted on common cobs, low bred and with sluggish dispositions, but they are very poor mounts.

Every pony needs careful breaking to hounds, and this is not a beginner's job. A fidgety, excitable pony needs a great deal of riding and great care if he is to settle down into a good hunter. All native ponies are born jumpers, there is no difficulty about that; the difficulty lies in training the pony to be steady and quiet in such exciting circumstances. Many a pony who is as good as gold when hacking, loses his head, and with it his manners, when he sees hounds. The first few times a pony comes out he cannot be ridden too quietly. He should be taken to the meet and home again two or three times a week, if that is possible. After that he should be allowed to follow at a steady pace in the background, with a good horseman on him, and this should continue until he settles down.

We do not want him to think that hunting invariably means a wild and thrilling gallop, for if he thinks that, he will never give us any peace. Many ponies go fairly quietly on their first day out, but after that, when they understand what hunting means, they get 'hotted up' and it is difficult to quiet them again. Hunting is a game that the horse revels in; he enjoys it just as much as his master.

The child should be on a leading-rein until it is clear that he can control his mount, and the groom should be mounted on a quiet grass-fed cob, so that all

attention can be given to the young rider. If the groom is the old-fashioned Irish sporting type he will be an invaluable companion for the child. As soon as possible the leading-rein should be left off, and the child, if he has the right pony, can then be trusted on his own. The right pony is far more likely to be a moorland pony than the show type.

#### SCENT

The more we understand about hunting, the more we enjoy it. If we have a dog of sporting tastes a great deal can be learnt from him about 'scent' before we go out hunting at all. Take him out rabbiting and watch his behaviour. He will nose about among the bracken and bramble-bushes until he puts up a rabbit, and then there is terrific excitement. Your business is to stand still quietly. You cannot help him; your own scenting powers are practically non-existent. Even if you see the rabbit bolt and he does not, you are wiser to keep quiet. If you halloo him on to the line, ten to one he will lose the scent and give up all interest. If you leave him alone, he will probably pick up the line, and if you follow at a discreet distance you will see him tear along for a hundred yards or so. Then suddenly scent fails – the rabbit has turned aside. Leave your dog quite alone and you may see him making 'a cast' all on his own, first straight ahead, then right, then left. At last he is on the line again and off he goes harder than ever – perhaps silent, perhaps yowling with excitement, with you well behind him. If scent fails, do not interfere with him by talking to him, or trying to show him which way the rabbit has gone. Once you 'get his head up' it is difficult for him to get 'on the line' again. Do not be so far forward that your scent, which is powerful, can interfere with the scent of the rabbit. This would make it impossible for your dog to pick up the line.

With a good dog and a good scent you can have a great deal of fun in this way. He may keep 'on the line' for a long time until you are quite pumped out, and thankful when he marks his quarry to ground in a rabbit-hole under a big gorse-bush. You will notice that on one day scent is good and you have a good run. On another – a bad scenting day – your dog has difficulty in finding his rabbits and cannot hunt them. Be careful not to pursue your private hunting anywhere except by permission or on open common land and be sure the hounds are not out anywhere near or you might spoil sport.

#### HUNTING ON FOOT

You can learn a great deal too by going out hunting on foot provided that your boots are strong enough and your clothes too.

Be at the meet in good time. The Master likes everyone to be punctual, and there is always a great deal to see. In the cub-hunting season, meets are early,

sometimes at daybreak. They gradually get later, until November 1, which is about the day of the opening meet. The hour is then usually 11 a.m. Shortly before this there is a stir of excitement, and the Huntsman in his pink coat and velvet cap comes into view, riding at a walking pace and surrounded by his hounds, whose sterna are waving and their brown eyes beaming with happiness.

A good huntsman is born, not made. He must have a great knowledge of hounds and be able to gain their love. He must understand them so well that he almost seems one of them, so great is his knowledge of the likely places for a fox to lie, and the probable line he will take. On days when scent is poor he encourages them to find their fox, to push him out of covert, to stick to the line and pursue him in the face of all difficulties, until they either mark him to ground or kill him. The best huntsmen are quiet and interfere as little as possible with their hounds, though they are helpful if hounds are at fault. The huntsman's place is with his hounds, well ahead of 'the field'. He must pursue his very difficult work with imperturbable good temper, with a cheery word for everyone. He has got to give satisfaction to the M.F.H. and to 'the field'. This last is difficult, there are always people out who know very little about hunting but who are very ready to criticize. He must also have a cheery word for every man, woman and child in his country on the way to the meet and on the way home again. He and the Whip are generally the most popular men in their country-side.

Behind the hounds on the way to the meet rides the Whipper-in. He too is in hunting-pink with a velvet cap. His job is to keep the hounds together and to make sure they are in their right place around or just behind the Huntsman. They must not be allowed to wander off on their own, chasing rabbits, looking for a bone or perhaps putting in at a farm where they were 'walked' to visit old friends. The Whip's job is to keep the pack together, and by tact and gentle coercion to persuade them to go in the right direction.

The Whip in the House of Commons has exactly the same sort of job with Members of Parliament, who must be persuaded to vote with their Party. He was so named after the Whipper-in in the hunting-world. The name was given him long ago when everybody knew something about hunting procedure, which unfortunately is not true today.

The Whip needs great tact with hounds. He must keep discipline, but hounds are highly bred and nervous, and if rated much, or if they got a touch of the whip they would sulk or go off on their own. The Whip has to be everywhere at once. When hounds are in covert his job is to stand at some view-point and halloo the fox away. He must then make sure that every hound has left the covert and get after the flying pack as quickly as he can. He too must be a good horseman and willing to take fences as they come. His share of falls is usually a large one, for he generally is mounted on the horses which nobody else in the hunt-stables wants.



Another interesting person is the earth-stopper. He is often dressed in an old suit of hunting-pink, and sometimes has the kennel terriers with him. His job is to stop all the earths in the neighbourhood of the meet on hunting days. He goes about his job with a big lantern in the dark of a winter's morning through the wintry woods and fields. At this time the fox is out hunting and if on his return home he found an earth unstopped he would pop into it and give no run at all. But if he has to make 'a point' for some distant covert he will give a good run.

Huntsman and Whip like you to smile and say 'good-morning' but they do not want to talk, they are much too busy. Soon after their arrival and probably at 11 a.m. sharp, the Master will arrive. Be ready to smile or take off your hat if he looks your way. You will notice that the Master, like the Huntsman, has a little horn tucked into his breast-pocket. He too is in 'hunting-pink' – which is really scarlet – and wears a velvet cap. Sometimes the Master hunts the hounds himself, but much more often he employs a professional.

The Master has a difficult job keeping his 'field' in order. People are apt to straggle about instead of keeping together. If they do this they are bound to 'head the fox' *i.e.*, they prevent him breaking out of covert, or sometimes when he is out of covert they prevent him from making 'his point'. Sometimes people talk too much and disturb the coverts. Some of them take little interest in hound work; and if scent is catchy and there is a check, they crowd on to the line and prevent the hounds picking up the scent. They thus spoil their own sport, and an M.F.H. must be very strong and very tactful if he is to prevent them doing it. Your job is to give the Master all the help you can by obeying him instantly, and never criticizing.

The Master on arrival at the meet has a short talk with the Huntsman and the campaign for the day is settled. Soon afterwards the Master gives the word to start, and the Huntsman blows a short note on his horn and goes off surrounded by the hounds, with the Whip just behind. The Master comes next followed by the 'field'.

They proceed at 'hound's pace' which is six miles an hour. The procession at this time of the proceedings is a very orderly one, so much so that a small friend of mine asked me whether they all picked partners before they started. 'Hounds pace' is the pace which has been found to be least tiring for both hounds and horses. They cannot be saved too carefully, for in a day's hunting they cover an enormous amount of country.

The Huntsman trots on steadily until he reaches the first covert, which may be a few fields away or a mile or two off. Hounds are 'thrown in' and you will hear them hunting through the undergrowth, searching for their fox. Sometimes the Huntsman's voice will be heard encouraging them; sometimes the Whip's, rating a hound for chasing rabbits. Hounds speak from time to time questing this way and that. Suddenly there is a babel of sound, all the pack seem to be giving

tongue at once. They have 'got a line' and with luck will drive their fox out and have a good run. The better the pack the more closely they stick to the line, and the quicker they can get him out the more likely is it that there will be a good run. But there are many difficulties for hounds and huntsman. Scent may be bad. The covert may be full of foxes and hounds keep 'changing'. Or the fox may be 'headed' and prevented from getting away. He will not go away unless the coast is clear, and if he refuses to leave, scent gets harder to follow. If hounds get away, and you are on foot, you must follow in the wake of 'the field' and very often you may come up with them again if the fox gets to ground, or if they lose him. But if the run is a good one you will be left altogether. And if this happens you will make up your mind that your next day's hunting will be on your pony.

#### THE FIRST HUNT ON YOUR PONY

You must make careful preparations for the next hunting day – mounted. Make sure overnight that your bridle and saddle, and your own clothes are in perfect order.

Your pony must be in good condition, or hunting will be too great a strain on him. You must use your own discretion as to whether or not to bring him into the stable the night before a hunting day; this may upset a young or excitable pony, and if he spends the whole night ramping round his box and getting no rest, it will do him no good. But if he is of a quieter temperament it may be well to bring him in to make sure he has a quiet night. Brush him well over. Give him a good warm dry bed and a good feed, and a bucket of water in his box. Water him first thing in the morning and then feed him. He should have finished his feed a good hour before starting.

Overnight, study the biggest scale ordnance survey map that you can get hold of, so that you get an idea of the lie of the land. Do this again after hunting and you will get to know your country much more quickly, and the names of the coverts, and the names of the most important fields. 'An eye for country' is one of the hunting man's most valuable gifts. Some people always know instinctively just where they are and which is the shortest way home or the best way out of any field. Others never know any of these things.

When you reach the meet, if your pony is quiet, stand still and watch the hounds. Count up how many couples there are, and try and pick out one or two which specially interest you and learn their names. If your pony is fidgety, keep him walking about well away from hounds and horses. Remember that horses who are not used to ponies are sometimes nervous of them and may lash out. Keep your pony therefore well away from other horses' hindquarters; and on no account allow him to stretch out his nose and nibble the tail of the horse in front

of him while you are thinking of something else. If you see a horse with a red ribbon tied to his tail, that means he is a kicker and you must be doubly careful.

When hounds move off, trot along steadily behind them with 'the field'. When you reach the first covert you must keep with 'the field' but try and place yourself down wind, where you can hear what is going on inside the covert. It is important to listen carefully so that you can make a good guess at what is happening. If you are up-wind you will hear nothing. And if you are too fond of chatting you will hear nothing either, and if hounds go away you will probably get left.

If you pay strict attention to business you will get a good start, and this is of the greatest importance. If you get a bad start you will be extremely lucky if you get on good terms with hounds again. You will be at the tail of the hunt from the start to finish. And it will be all your own fault, which of course makes it worse.

A large part of your business will consist in keeping eyes and ears very wide open and in remembering what happened in former runs. Try always to see or hear which way hounds are turning; let us say that we can hear that they are turning right-handed; then perhaps the fox is bound for the covert two miles off, which we ran to last time? This fence is too big, but fortunately we can remember that there was a nice gap a little way down. Once over, we see the field is dividing, one half galloping to the left, the other to the right; which shall we choose? Fortunately we remember that the right-handed way leads over the railway line and last time it took a long time to open the gates and get across. The left-hand way with the grass track under the railway bridge is obviously the best. Now we are in a lovely bit of country, four fences running – how well the pony is going! And now there is that horrible brook ahead, deep, muddy, unjumpable; but last time there were wise people who turned left, dropped down the bank carefully and crossed by an almost invisible ford – that is your way.

Do not keep your pony out too long. You should leave hounds about one or two o'clock, and when you see people eating their sandwiches take it as a warning to be off. Your pony is not in such good condition as a stabled horse and you will be wise to have a short day, and perhaps be able to bring him out for another short day in four or five days' time. Two short days are much better for him than one long one.

Directly you can move off without getting in the way of hounds start off for home. After you have gone a mile or two you can get off and lead your pony, to give his back a rest. You can give him a drink at a convenient pool if you see the chance, and eat your sandwiches. Then walk and jog along steadily until you reach home. Never stop anywhere if you can help it; accomodation for horses is difficult to find nowadays and it is up to you to get him home as comfortably and as soon as possible. Walk him for the last quarter of a mile; it is important to



bring him in quite cool; it will be better still if you walk beside him and loosen the girths.

When you reach the stable take off the saddle and bridle, rub his back where the saddle was with a handful of straw to dry it and bring back the circulation, then turn him out at once into the field. If he rolls it is a sign that he is all right and not overdone.

Let me repeat that it is a great mistake to leave a grass-kept pony in the stable 'to cool down'. What generally happens is that the pony 'breaks out' in a sweat, is then impossible to dry, and gets a chill. If you bring him in cool and turn him out at once this will not happen. The wind and fresh air will dry him.

Give him his hay and his feed out in his field, or if you think he is tired, give him his hay only and his feed an hour later when he is better able to digest it. Go in and take off your own things, have a hot bath and then your tea. Then go out again to see how he is. He will probably have rolled until he is plastered with mud, which will do him good. Generally speaking he will be better left out as usual. But if the weather is very cold, with icy rain and you have a box for him, bring him in for the night. If you do this you must feed him again last thing and turn him out first thing in the morning to his usual outdoor life and routine. It is only the hardy Moorland pony who is likely to stand up to the outdoor life. A pony with either thoroughbred or Arab or common blood cannot be expected to rough it outdoors. He needs the comfort of a stable. But though the Moorland pony is very hardy he must be properly looked after if he is to go hunting.

#### PACE

Most young people like to go as hard as their horses can lay legs to the ground. But this is not the way of getting to the end of a run, or of keeping your pony fit and sound.

If you allow your pony to gallop all out he will soon get blown. Keep him, therefore, just within his fastest pace. If you go too fast you will soon feel your pony going 'all abroad'. If this happens you must at once 'take a pull' and go slower until he recovers himself. Otherwise he will soon be done. You should try always to keep him going 'collectedly' with his head fairly high.

Every horse has his own pace and must not be pushed beyond it. Some horses are fast and can easily keep in front. Others are slower, and if you want to see the end of the run, go steadily and remember that a horse who is going beyond his pace cannot go far. Do not be carried away by the dashing riding of some young man on a blood hunter who seems constantly getting left behind and then gallops so fast that he passes every other horseman. You will often notice that his speed is the only remarkable thing about him and you will probably not see him at the end of the run. Take rather as your example that sporting elderly gentleman on

a weight-carrying hunter. He has had years of experience behind him. He is quiet and inconspicuous. He goes steadily but he keeps on going and he never gets 'left'. His horse's head is always in the right position and though he is a heavy-weight his horse always seems to be going comfortably 'within himself', keeping up a steady even pace, and he never refuses. Whatever horse this man rides goes in the same steady but most efficient manner. His horses seem to suit him exactly. You may not notice him either at the meet, or during the run, but at the end of the run he is sure to be there quite unperturbed and with his horse un-blown. Nearly every hunt has a good example of this sort.

#### FENCES

You will have already learnt to jump fences at home, and you will find that out hunting jumping is easier, even though the fences may be much bigger. This is because your pony goes straight ahead with no thought of refusal. Excitement urges you both on and you are both of one mind, 'Be with them I will'. When you see a fence in front of you take a pull at your pony, do not let him gallop right into it; first steady him, then when you are about twenty yards from the fence put him straight at it holding him firmly between your hands and legs and he will jump it. If you arrive at a fence with your pony blown he cannot jump it; his hindlegs are not under him and the only thing he can do is refuse.

A sound 'take off' will make all the difference to his ability to clear a fence. A take-off out of heavy plough makes things very hard for him. Or a take-off which is 'sticky' or 'poached' where many people have jumped in front of you, or rotten from rabbit-holes. The landing too is important; sometimes one finds too late that there is a big drop ahead or that one is jumping into rabbit-holes. Some people have jumped unknowingly into ponds, others into stone quarries. Obviously we have got to leave a great deal to our mount, who will be much better able to deal with these difficult situations than we are. All you can do in such unexpected circumstances is to sit perfectly still, and give him every chance to use his brains.

Hunting is a matter of partnership and co-operation. You must choose the best place to jump the fence, and being taller you get a better view as you approach. But once you have decided on the exact place you mean him to jump you must leave it to him to decide exactly how he should jump it. If you ride him steadily and quietly so that he can use his brains, you will be astonished at your joint performance.

Jumping fences is a great test of the rider's progress. If you ever go hunting with the staghounds in the West Country or any other place where there is little or no jumping, you will notice that riders of small ability are able to keep up with the hounds for quite a long time. But when it comes to a jumping country it is a

different matter. Many of 'the field' disappear for good-and-all after the first fence. The reason for this is, not so much that they are unable to jump, as that they have not yet learnt sufficient control of their mount to collect him and present him properly at his fences – he cannot therefore jump however willing he may be.

I never had much hunting on my Moorland ponies, though I had enough to realize what good hunters they were. The following notes on fences are therefore written from the point of view of a bigger horse.

There are two types of fence which need special understanding. One is timber. It is the ambition of most young people to jump a gate. Many good hunters can do this but horses are usually trained the wrong way. If you live in Sussex, which is a great country for timber-jumping, you will notice that a very large proportion of horses of every shape and size are good timber-jumpers, whereas in far better hunting countries where people are much better mounted, solid timber usually strikes terror to the heart of both mount and man. The explanation is this. In Sussex there are many oak-woods, and fences made of split-oak are unbreakable; every horse knows that. He must therefore either clear these solid obstacles of three and a half to four feet or refuse to have anything to do with them. He has, however, every chance of practising over Sussex heave-gates in and out of the small woods. The first flight clear the lot; those not sure of themselves wait till the top bar is pulled out and the jump greatly reduced. For those who still do not like the look of it a second bar is pulled out, and a nice little fence of two and a half feet is left. It is still solid and must still be jumped clean or not at all. Horses who have plenty of practice at these small solid jumps are soon ready to take on something bigger.

In other hunting countries and in the show-ring, horses find out that timber will break. This is the worst lesson that they can learn and having learnt it they can never again be trusted over solid timber.

Another obstacle which usually frightens both horses and riders is water. The rider's point of view is easily understood. He knows that if his horse jumps short, he will be submerged in a muddy stream right over his bowler hat. Or even worse, if his horse refuses he may take a header by himself into the muddy depths. This is most unpleasant, especially on a cold winter's day. He crawls out like a drowned rat, wet to the skin, and usually has to go home at once! The horse is frightened of water because he meets it so seldom; but if only you can find a tiny stream to practise him over until he loses his fears he will soon progress to something bigger. I have seen two-year-old ponies out at grass follow one another over an Oxfordshire brook which proved an insuperable obstacle to a well-mounted 'field'.

One is usually told to ride slowly at timber and fast at water. It is certainly true that to jump timber one needs one's horse especially well collected. I found that



it was wiser for water-jumping too to go steadily, so that one's horse was collected and could see what he was doing. Very often the banks of streams are boggy or rotten from water and rat-holes – a steady pace gives your pony a chance to choose sound ground on which to take off. But horses vary, and we must consider their point of view. My best hunter, a thoroughbred mare, was a magnificent performer, but she would brook no interference whatever and all her fences were taken at racing-pace or not at all. She never gave me a fall; her brain seemed to work three times as quickly as mine.

#### DIFFERENT HUNTING COUNTRIES

There are some countries where grass fields are large, fences big, and ponies have a poor time. They cannot keep up with long-legged hunters in a galloping country, nor can they jump big fences with big ditches. You need a well-bred horse 'with scope' who can 'spread himself' for that.

But most hunting countries are not like this and are very well suited to ponies. Enclosures are smaller, fences are of all sorts and sizes; many of them are trappy and need brains, or are 'hairy' and need a thick coat. They need a hunter with his heart in the right place, who is determined to be with hounds no matter what the difficulties. They also need one who can keep on his legs, no matter how rough the going is. There are many big hunters who lack one or more of these qualities, but most native ponies have them all.

A child who has a good pony and goes well can have a grand time; he will probably find that his moorland pony for his inches is a better performer than any hunter he will own later in life. Will Ogilvie in a poem about children and their ponies said:

*Give them room for galloping, youth will find its year,  
Time will cap them forward and cheer them to a place;  
Dappled hounds will run for them, horses jump like deer,  
These will keep in England the glory of the chase.*

#### THE RIDER'S MANNERS

We cannot be too careful about our manners out hunting, for it is difficult to have good manners in the hunting-field and needs a very special effort. Every individual's manners are of the greatest importance. Some children appear to think that because they are so well turned out, or because their parents are rich, or because they are well born, or because they have lived so long in that particular place, they can afford to be careless about their manners, but this is not so – quite otherwise. Those who have special advantages have also very special responsibilities – *noblesse oblige*.

Here are some of the things which need extra care. Do all you can to help the Master and the Hunt Staff and not hinder them; if the Master gives you an order, obey at once cheerfully, even if you don't know what his reasons are; if he upbraids you, never sulk or make excuses, even if you are quite innocent. If you see a chance of helping anyone, seize it. I remember noticing a boy of twelve or so, who when hounds were going from one covert to another, managed to go on ahead to a very bad gateway which was deep in mud, and jumping off his pony dragged it open for the huntsman. A child on a pony can get off and on much more easily than his older and stiffer elders. You can be sure he earned a very good mark for that. Never crab your own pack, back it up on every possible occasion, and stick up for it. I have never yet hunted with a pack without hearing before long some section of 'the field' complain that 'he is no good'. 'He' being sometimes the Master and sometimes the Huntsman. These criticisms usually come from people who have no idea of the difficulties of hunting a pack of hounds.

Be kind to other people, especially if they are strangers or seem to have no friends. Good manners come from kind hearts. If your hearts are kind your manners will be good and you will not be tempted to pick other people to pieces.

When people say 'Good morning' to you, say 'Good morning' back and be sure to smile. If you do not smile you give the impression that you would rather not have been spoken to. Study other people's mounts and try to recognize young horses, excitable or nervous horses, and thoroughbred horses, all of which need treating with special care.

A large part of good manners in the hunting field depends on knowledge of the horse's nature. You must not, for instance, barge into other people, for that upsets most horses. Neither must you gallop past them at any place which is likely to upset them – say in a lane, nor must you jump out of your turn. 'Turns' are very important out hunting; if you arrive, say fifth, at a fence or at a crowded gateway, you jump or go through fifth and never before. Never allow your pony to jump so close behind someone that if the leader fell you would be on top of him. Nor crowd up on other horses at gateways, and so on. It is very difficult to keep these rules when hounds go away, and everyone is crowding for the only two or three places in a fence, and your pony is terribly excited. But the way to get a good start is to pay strict attention to business, when hounds are drawing; if you have done this you will get your start; if you have omitted to do it, you must not make up for your carelessness by upsetting other people. When you know you have offended, always say you are sorry, even though it is an effort.

#### HUNTING PEOPLE

There are so many ways of enjoying hunting that everybody may be happy. About five per cent of the 'field' are always to be seen in the first flight. They

lead the van, and they will probably be there, however they are mounted. Then come perhaps twenty-five per cent who will go anywhere provided they have a good lead. Then another twenty-five per cent who only jump the little places. Then there are the careful riders who have no intention whatever of jumping; among these are a few who have the gift of always knowing the run of the fox, the nearest gate, and the handy lane. All these classes enjoy themselves in their different ways, and, well or ill mounted, they usually remain in the same class.

Hunting is so varied in its appeal that there is something to please everybody. Some hunt for the joy of jumping and galloping, others for the joy of watching the pack working, some to have a day in the open air with the privilege of riding over glorious country, some to talk to their friends, some for their health. To all it is the best sport in the world. If you have the root of the matter in you you will realize very soon that nothing else can equal it. Nothing else can make you so happy. Hundreds of years ago Xenophon said:

‘All men who loved hunting have been good; and not men only, but those women also to whom the goddess has given this blessing.’

#### CROPS, GATES, ETC.

Not least among the advantages of hunting are the opportunities for making friends with the farmer. Most of us are town dwellers nowadays, and this opportunity of getting to know the farmer and his point of view will be invaluable to us.

Shut all gates if you are last through to prevent cattle straying; this means a great deal of self-sacrifice, but if you do it you help your hunt and the farmer; it is impossible to know whether the field is really empty by a casual glance round. Do your best to hold gates open if there is anyone behind you; some gates, once they swing to, are very hard to re-open.

#### YOUR FIRST GOOD RUN

Before we part I should like to watch you and your pony going well in your first really good run. Your first day's hunting on your pony is now a thing of the past and you have learnt a good deal since then. Every day's hunting has taught you more. You have learnt the different notes on the horn which will help you to know what is happening just as it helps the hounds. At the covert the huntsman encouragingly calls to the hounds ‘Looe in there’ and sometimes they are not too keen to face the tearing of the brambles or of the gorse unless they feel sure a fox is about. Once in the covert you hear the horn again and the huntsman calling ‘Try in there, try in’! Then if there is a halloa in the distance and the huntsman decides it is the fox he is hunting and not another one, you hear him call ‘Hike holler! Hike holler!’ as he gallops down the ride. Then there is



'Gone away', a sound to 'waken the dead', as you know if you sing John Peel. And the long note of 'Gone to ground', and the sad note 'Home'.

If you are standing with 'the field' in a narrow lane you sometimes hear the Huntsman calling urgently 'Hounds gentlemen please!' He is coming back down the lane and feeling anxious lest his hounds be kicked by one among the crowd of horses. Your duty is to clear out of his way at once and make quite sure your pony cannot kick hounds. The best way of doing this in a crowded lane is to turn your pony with his heels against the fence so that he faces hounds as they pass down the lane. Hold out your hunting-crop at the same time, with the thong loose and hanging between your pony and the hounds; this will prevent them crowding too close to him. It is a serious offence to kick a hound, but if you have big dogs at home your pony will not be nervous of them, which is usually the cause of kicking.

The hounds come first and must have every consideration. Always give them precedence, do not crowd them, or gallop too close to them; they are nervous animals. At a check, keep well back and be patient.

You must always keep wide awake, for any day you may miss the run of the season, which would be a tragedy. We imagine you now towards the end of the Christmas holidays standing listening near the covert. The hounds are working steadily through it. You can hear the huntsman's voice calling cheerily to his hounds and now and then a short note on the horn. You will see perhaps the Whip at the far corner of the wood standing still as a statue. All of a sudden he puts his hand to his mouth and gives an ear-splitting screech of 'gone away'. The Huntsman crashes down the muddy ride through the wood, blowing quick short notes on his horn. He jumps a small fence into the field where the Whip is standing. The hounds pour after him, a torrent of white and black and tan. They get the line almost at once and stream away over the grass with the huntsman in close attendance. The Whip pauses just long enough to make sure that every hound has left the covert. The Master is with difficulty holding 'the field' back until the pack is well away. The excitement is terrific. The horses are mad to be off. It is all you can do to hold your pony.

It is none too easy to get a start. The first fence is wired and therefore unjumpable. People must wait their turn to go through the nearest gate. There is another gate at the bottom of the field, and a jumpable fence further off still. You must make up your mind in a flash which of these three exits is the best for you. If you were wise, you thought it all out while you were waiting at the covert, and decided perhaps in favour of the second gate. Now you are through and have room to ride. The next fence can be jumped in half a dozen places. Your pony is mad with excitement and would rather die than be out of it. He clears the fence, which is a fly-fence, in grand style and tears across the next field. At the far side there is no fence but only a deep yawning ditch – very ugly – your heart comes

into your mouth. He lowers himself carefully down the side of it and then leaps right out – a mighty spring. Taking a hasty glance back, you see two or three tall hunters refusing this nasty place and your enthusiasm is in no way diminished! Hounds are racing away well on your right with the Huntsman and one or two others with them. The farmer near you calls out ‘There’s a brook ahead, follow me, Missy!’, and he pushes forward on his rough four-year-old. The brook is not very big but already lower down you can see horses refusing. One is wading down the middle with his rider still on. One, without a rider, is scrambling out on the take-off side. You follow your pilot. He knows the soundest take-off and gives his rough coated four-year-old no chance of refusing. For him it is in or over. The four-year-old with the courage of the young and inexperienced has no thought of refusal. She gives you a grand lead. It is now your turn; can you do it? Your pony sails right out and is over too. What ‘a feel’ it gives you! ‘Well done!’ calls your pilot looking back with a cheerful grin. He knows all about it and you cannot have a better man to follow. Hunting farmers are great sportsmen and know every field and every gap for miles around their own farms. You follow him over another couple of fences and a nice little hurdle stretched across a gap, and then comes a bit of plough which makes your pony blow a bit. You are not altogether sorry to see that in the next field the Huntsman is off his horse and the hounds round him. They have marked their fox to ground and the run is over.

‘That’s a grand pony you have’ says your pilot, and you swell with pride. He is a grand pony; he would die rather than not be with hounds. He has a heart of gold, and the courage of a lion. Get off him now to rest his back. If he is at all blown turn his head to the wind so that he can get the benefit of any breeze and loosen his girths.

You must get off home now, for your pony is not in hard condition, and you have ten miles to go. Fortunately you have been in this part of the country before, and you remember a line of gates leading across big grass fields, and then a long lane. There is very little main road, which is a blessing. How lovely the ploughed fields are looking with the sun already getting low. You have plenty to think about; every fence will be jumped in imagination over and over again. What a grand feeling it was sailing over that brook! What a happy day!

When you have made your pony comfortable for the night and had your hot bath and your tea you can tuck yourself up in an armchair and read one of these books; they are all classics. Try and buy them either new or second-hand.

*Riding Recollections*, by Whyte-Melville.

*The Adventures of an Irish R. M.*, by Somerville and Ross.

*Handley Cross*, by Surtees, which will tell you all about Mr Jorrocks.

*Pink and Scarlet*, by Major-General Alderson.

*Reynard the Fox*, by John Masefield.

## Epilogue

I have tried to say in these pages how I have known and loved the horse and the pony, and I shall be well repaid if anything I have said may help some of the younger generation to that understanding and sympathy and love for the horse which will give them one of the purest and best joys that life can afford.

The saddest result of the motor is the banishment of the horse from the common life of the people. This is not merely the substitution of one mode of conveyance for another – it is a sacrifice of the spiritual to the material. Throughout the ages man and horse have been comrades and allies, together they have subdued and cultivated God's earth, together they have shared the pride and anguish of battle, together known the glories and joys of the chase. And in all this partnership the horse has given far more than he has received; he has given affection, courage, ungrudging service, and too often he has received nothing in return except neglect, harsh treatment, blows and cruelty. The tale of all horses worn out in man's service would be pitiable if it could be told. A motor can never compensate for the companionship of the horse. In that companionship man learns many things: gentleness and patience come to him, insight and sympathy, courage and endurance. He learns to be firm yet kind – to temper justice with mercy. Dealing with God's noblest creature he learns the things of God – and at the end, by the grace of God, perhaps his horse will bring him to that heaven for which 'all horses are fit, but few men'.







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